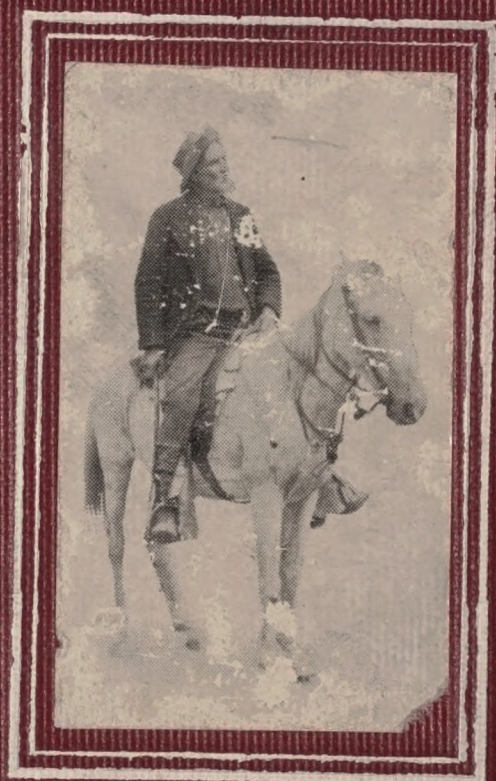


# IN THE SHADOW OF THE CUMBERLANDS



FREDERICK  
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IN THE SHADOW OF THE CUMBERLANDS













SEXTON.



# IN THE SHADOW OF THE CUMBERLANDS

A STORY  
OF  
KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN LIFE

BY  
FREDERICK WILLIAM POWERS

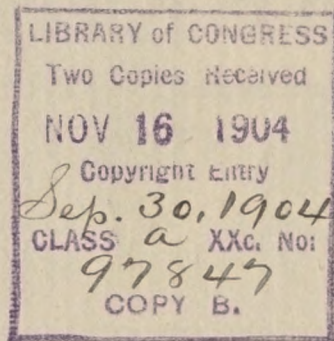
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TO  
FRANCIS  
AND  
LEORA







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# IN THE SHADOW OF THE CUMBERLANDS

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## CHAPTER I.

TOBE SEXTON.



LOWLY a southern sun was sinking. The light of a dying day, like a memory hovered over the western sky. Up from a waste of unkept fields softly as a whisper stole the fragrant breath of approaching night. On an upland among the Cumberland's blue-domed peaks stood an old man, and he too, was in the twilight of his day. Character had stamped this man with a powerful seal. His hair and beard as white as virgin snow marked a closing year, yet a frame as rugged as the wilds that lie about seemed fit to withstand many another blasting gale. With folded arms on the rider of a vagrant fence he looked out over an expanse of grandeur—meadow, woodland, gulch, spur, and on, to the far off peaks where



the earth rose up and kissed the sky. His eyes traveled a yellow strip of dirt—a road, that wound far down and away to the North where stretched the Sandy Valley, a great green basin, gently sloping from the foothills of the Cumberlands to the Ohio. More than seventy years this picturesque spot had been his home. In the aged log house which here lifted its humble gables he was born; and never had he strayed far from its friendly hearth, save when he rode with Morgan, the Raider.

There was naught in the abounding art, poetry, or romance of the panorama that charmed Tobe Sexton to that old worm fence—brought him to turn one backward glance over a trodden trail. He thought not of any impendence, still some alien energy strove to shoot a warning spark where reason failed to penetrate. He, himself, could not have told why he stood forlorn in contemplation of a past.

This man Sexton was a Kentucky Mountaineer; a type of pioneer days, stocky, muscular, with strength like a bear, and a will of iron. His passions might be turbulent as a tornado or gentle as an infant's smile, that depended. Of culture he had little, needed little, but a native force imbued with the positiveness of his mountains had



made of him a monarch of his class. Yet below it all, there beat a tender heart, for he was a musician.

Finally darkness came and broke the old man's reverie. He turned away with a sigh and went into the house. The cheerful breeze of a May evening played through the room. He took his violin from the wall and sat down by an open window. For nearly two hundred years this violin had been a pleasure to his people and for miles around its fame was known.

Sexton drew the bow across the strings and the sweet notes of an old-time melody echoed through the surrounding forest. Then, there came from another room a fair young girl, of not more than sixteen years, and stood by the old musician. It was his only daughter, Lady Sexton; and as delicate and graceful as a wild flower was she, with a face divinely beautiful and hair as black as night clustering in ringlets of ebony about her shapely shoulders. The girl said never a word to the powerful man, so different from her, but with a distressed look painfully plain upon her sweet face she waited.

When he had finished the piece he was playing he arose, hung the violin upon the wall, and



walked to the door. His daughter turned towards him and said:

“Father, where are you going?”

“I wuz thinkin’ I’d potter over ’bout ther still, Lady. Why? Do you need er bucket uv water ’fore I go?” he said.

“No, I want to talk to you, father: I want to tell you how sad I am, don’t be angry, father, I feel that I must plead with you to give up the business of making whiskey. Father, some day, the marshals will come and get you, and take you away to prison: then, what will become of me?”

“Daughter, I’ll listen ter ye, but I’m ’fraid hit’ll be hard work learnin’ an’ old dog nêw tricks,” said Sexton, again taking his seat, his face growing troubled.

“Do you remember, father, the vow you made the day my dear mother died? Do you remember, father, that you promised her, then, when I was a little child that you would rear me as a lady, and that you would never again violate the law, or sin against the Lord, by making whiskey? Father, do you remember all those promises?” She was now looking beseechingly, at his rigid face, her soft eyes filled with tears.

“Yes, my daughter, I do, but I low as ter how some one is goin’ ter make ther stuff; an’ I mout



ez well hev ther benefit ez ther next one; an', ez ter ther danger uv them marshals gittin' me, that's er long sight easier said than done. W'y, thar haint ernuf New-Nited States marshals in Kaintucky, ter fotch me outin thet den uv mine; an', bein' ez two of them laddy-bucks hev been drapped from ther hosses, by Sandy County boys, since last Spring, I don't rekon marshals will be ez thick ez skeeters this Fall, no how," said the old man, with a knowing twinkle in his eye.

"Father," she continued with more determination in her voice, "it was not right to murder those poor men; they were doing their duty; they came into Sandy County to take the moonshiners to court. You have no right to make whiskey without paying the government tax. It is no less murder to kill a United States Deputy-Marshal than any one else."

Sexton arose, strode back and forth across the room, seemingly in deep thought—then suddenly stopping, he confronted her and shaking his clenched fist, cried:

"My daughter, I haint sayin' hits right ter kill deputy-marshals; nuther am I calculatin' hits 'ezactly accordin' to scriptur fer them ter come inter these mountains, pour out er feller's beer, chop his still ter pieces, an' carry him off ter lay



in ther gover'ment jail fer six months, ur a year. Ther Lord Almighty giv man ther land fer ter make er livin' ofen. He furnished man with seed corn, an' apple sprouts; an' told him ter go forth an' plant em, an' ter make use uv ther products ez he seed fit. Ther Lord didn't say, don't yer make corn whiskey outin yer corn, nur he didn't say, don't make apple jack outin yer apples; but, he did say: He causeth ther grass ter grow fer ther cattle, an' ther herbs fer ther service uv man; thet he may bring forth food outin ther yearth; an' wine thet maketh glad ther heart uv man, an' ile ter make his face ter shine, an' bread which strengthens man's heart. My child, hits nuthin more nur less than northern spite-work; they send ther deputy-marshals into Sandy County, they what runs ther gover'ment—spiteful Northern Yankees—becaze they want vengeance; they haint furgot thet ther Big Sandy Rifles rode with Morgan—ther Raider—in '62; they haint fergot how we mowed em down at Shiloh. They haint satisfied ter hev destroyed our salt works, freed our niggars, an' burn'd our houses; they want ter keep ther yoke on our necks, by taxin' our rights. Talk er about er free country! hits free, if yer Winchester barks ofen ernuf. We ar' denied ther privilege uv doin'



what we please with ther fruit uv our trees, ther grain uv our fields. They put er tax so high on whiskey makin' thet no man can afford ter make hit, unlesen, he ar' some Northerner, what has money ernuf ter rig up er great steam still, thet will run more liquor in er day then my copper kettles would in er year. So, ye see, my child, that we, uv Sandy County, ar' forced by ther infernal Yankees, ter let our craps go ter waste, ur resort ter moonshinin', ez they please ter call hit."

"Father," rejoined the girl, at the same time walking up to him and stroking his hair, lovingly, "I know that you are honest in what you say; to you, it does not appear wrong to 'moonshine;' but, father, it is wrong, and I fear that unless you quit it, great trouble will befall us of Sandy County. The laws of our government are just, and must be obeyed. You can not conceal your work so cunningly but some one will betray you. Promise me, father, that you will give up this dangerous pursuit; that you will be faithful to that promise—the promise you gave my mother."

"My daughter!" thundered Sexton, "much book larnin' has put Yankee idees inter yer head. Lady, I have alus done er good part by ye. When yer mother died didn't I take ye out uv



ther mountains an' put ye ter live with quality people? Didn't they edgercate ye, an' care fer ye an' love ye ez dearly ez they would ther own?"

"Yes, father," she replied, her eyes filling with tears.

"Now," he continued more enraged than ever, "ye come home er fine lady, an' in return fer my fatherly love, an' good hard cash, what do I git? Insults, threats an' abuse. Ye tell me thet my life's work is wrong, thet I am an outlaw," he continued with vehemence: "My daughter, I love ye, but ye must never cross me ergin with yer cursed Northern ideas. Had any man, in all Sandy County, dared ter say ter Sexton what ye hev said this day, him er me one would hev died, ez sure ez ther corn whiskey drips from my still-worm, in yander mountain."

While this conversation was going on, a weary traveler tramped along the old mountain road, that winds its lonely way from Richardson to Pound Gap, through primeval forest, over hills clad in evergreens, ferns, laurel and ivy; fragrant with the odor of wild service, mint, penyroyal, and blooming honeysuckles. This traveler was a young man of medium build, lean, slim, agile, wearing with easy grace a soldier's blue uniform. A fresh, pure, brilliant complexion glowed



with health and radiated with youthful ambition; in keeping with this complexion, a mass of loose yellow hair, curled about a nobly shaped head; there was little beauty in the face itself, except in the fascinating blue eyes which seemed to penetrate the very depths of the unknown. One unacquainted with this foot-sore and dust begrimed traveler, would have mistaken him for a youth, inexperienced and unused to the hardships of life; but, deeper insight would have proven the fallacy of this conception, for notwithstanding his immature appearance, he had faced many hardships—had been pitted against the rougher criminal classes of the world.



## CHAPTER II.

### A BIT OF HISTORY.



LIFTON ALLEN, the traveler, had for five years been in Uncle Sam's secret service. His father had served almost a lifetime in the same capacity.

The senior Allen made his advent along the northern brakes of the Cumberland mountains, on the Southeastern border of Kentucky soon after the close of the Civil war. At that time the entire South was groaning under its load of social wreckage. The Commonwealth was striving desperately to adjust itself to the new conditions. Down in the "Settlements"—the Blue Grass region—the negroes were demonstrating the virtue of their emancipation by committing pillage and outrage on their old masters; while in the mountains bands of horse-thieves, highwaymen, and house-breakers were nightly masquerading. Ku-Klux, Regulators, Moderators and other mystic clans sprang up in almost every neigh-



borhood, designedly to restrain and punish transgression, but by the nature of their precepts their purpose was thwarted by breeding a spirit of lawlessness that culminated in mid-night lynchings, lashings and depredations beyond number, until their names became as terrible as the Spanish Inquisition, or the Holy Vehem of Germany in the middle ages.

The hollows, gulches, chasms and caverns of the Pine, Big Stone, and Log Mountains afforded a safe retreat for the criminals and refugees of the bordering States. All in all, a condition of lawlessness unparalleled in the annals of American history existed and throve in this remote corner of the Old Blue Grass State. Counterfeiting, moonshining, gambling and fighting were common diversions from the more sober habits of husbandry, while law and order in those days commanded about as much respect as did Mother Shipton's prophecies.

George Allen, Clifton's father, for some three or four years during this turbulent period, indolently roamed over these mountains from counterfeiters' rendezvous to moonshiners' stronghold; from ku-klux conference to marauders' conclave—indeed he mingled in unlimited freedom with all classes. At times he would assist a friend-



ly coniacker to dispense the coin of the realm; while again he would lend a helping hand to some genial Shiner who sought to beguile from the maize the soothing drops of mountain dew. Gambling was to him an instinct, and as long as games were running his treasury was sure to be replete. Such was the early career of Clifton Allen's father in the Cumberland; but, late in the autumn of the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy, without any formal farewell to man or maid, he abruptly snapped the tender ties that bound him to the mountain clansmen. He was not heard of until in the following spring when many of his adventurous friends, counterfeitters and moonshiners, were extended a pressing invitation to visit the United States Court. To insure prompt compliance, he came with a host of revenue officers, and conducted them thither, bearing all expenses of the journey; and, within twelve months from the bestowal of these courtesies, the United States Deputy Marshal became a part and parcel of the Cumberland's social machinery.

Secondhand counterfeiting outfits and "one man stills" could be had at a much reduced price, owing to their owner's absence on business; most of them at that time being engaged by the govern-



ment. And from then on, for more than twenty years, George Allen continued to harass shiners and coniackers, until his name was to them a household word of terror from the Pine mountains to the mouth of Sandy. Every place that would afford a suitable rendezvous for either counterfeiting or illicit distilling was known to him; surely no man since the days of Boone was so familiar with the geography of that part of Kentucky, as was he. But, like the old pitcher that went to the well, he made one trip too many; one from which he never returned.

It was some time back in the year 1890, that George Allen and four associates left the village of Levica and made their way toward Buzzard Roost Gulch, where a band of counterfeiters were operating. This is the last time that Allen and his crew were ever heard of. All diligence was used to ascertain their fate, but in vain. It was generally believed that they had been murdered and their bodies burned or cast into some sullen chasm for the panthers and wildcats to devour, which held unmolested habitation there.

Since Clifton Allen's earliest memory he had looked forward with a thrill of childish joy to each home-coming of his father; that time to the boy being a period of unbroken pleasure. Be-



sides lavishing sweet-meats upon him, his father would take the little lad upon his knee and pour into his eager ears thrilling tales of those queer folks, who lived far up among the mountains. As the boy grew older, Allen taught him the songs of the Shiner's, and it was a strange and pretty contrast to hear the small piping child's voice, singing of stills and whiskey making, and such other things, without having any idea of what it all meant.

And when Cliff's mother would throw her arms around his father's neck, as he made ready to leave on another crusade, and with weeping eyes and pathetic sobs plead with him not to go, saying, "George, don't go up in to those dreadful mountains, those men will some day kill you," Allen would pat the boy fondly on the head and answer :

"If I get killed, Cliff will go up and avenge me." Then the little fellow would go and hold his father's hand, and dance around him, beaming with admiration, and in his babyish prattle, lisp, "I 'ish I tood do wif 'oo dis time, poddy, an' hep 'ou till Siners."

The years glided by and each succeeding one found Allen faithfully leading his convoy of Deputies into, or escorting his caravan of pris-



oners out of these wild and awful Cumberlands.

As little Cliff grew older, the impressions stamped on his babyish intellect by the stories and jests of his father developed into a staunch guiding influence that was now shaping a destiny so completely, that no human agency could change its purpose. So, when, instead of his gallant parent, that trying hour came, with its sad intelligence, Cliff stood mutely calm, and heard them say that his father was dead, somewhere, up in those terrible mountains—where, no one knew. Then all his long made promises to his father to avenge such a crime, came over his troubled thoughts like a whirling tornado, sweeping all his fancies into one great path—on to one mighty end.

Mrs. Allen watched for the coming of her husband, until the last ray of hope flickered and went out, then she returned to her native city where she and her children henceforth made their home with her father. In time came the boy's college days. His studies were pursued in an indifferent, aimless way. He read many books and applied himself assiduously to music. He had but one particular aim in life,—to avenge his father's death,—to be true to his childish promise. All things else were subservient to this one romantic dream.



## CHAPTER III.

### CLIFTON AND THE SEXTONS.



AS soon as his age would permit, young Allen enlisted in the Secret Service, and by his inborn cunning soon worked into favor with his superior who humored his whims and encouraged his eccentricities.

At last with marvelous swiftness, events began to play into his hands. Two deputy marshals, Rus Waterman and a colleague, had been murdered from ambush while traveling through that part of Kentucky known as the "Roughs of Tug." The "Service" cast about for the right man to hunt down the criminals, and Clifton Allen was sent to the Cumberlands.

Heretofore most of his work had been confined to the city, but now his labors were in a different field, and of a different nature. His craftiness was to be matched with that of a people unlike any he had ever known. It was in this region



that the bloodiest of all the implacable mountain feuds had, for years, raged impetuously; with the Hatfield clan arrayed against the McCoy faction, in a deadly quarrel where hatred and contention were to be terminated only by death; it was here that Rus Waterman and his companion had met death from ambush and it was here that death to the revenue officer lurked in every passing zephyr, and life depended on the fineness of a nerve.

For one so young and inexperienced as Cliff to attempt the capture of an organized band of outlaws who were violating by wholesale the revenue laws would, at first blush, appear as nothing less than sheer fool-hardiness, and when it was learned that he had been sent to the "Roughs of Tug" many grave apprehensions were heard and much anxiety was felt for the young lad. But Cliff heeded not the danger. A voice from the grave—his father's voice—called him on, and he must answer it.

As Cliff wended his way along through a deep shadowed ravine, hemmed in with black towering mountains, the awful grandeur of the scene brought back a train of long forgotten thoughts: "And these are the mountains my father loved so well," he mused; "and this, the same old road



he used to tell me about as I sat on his knee and listened to his stories. Poor father, I wonder what was his fate." Just then a wood-thrush up in a cluster of laurels on the mountain-side broke into an ecstatic carol that brought a lighter theme to mind and as he trudged up the slope, he hummed the words of a "Shiner's Song"—the song his father had taught him:

"Jist over ther hill thar stands a little still,  
An' ther smoke curls up ter ther sky,  
Ye kin easily tell by ther whiffle uv ther still,  
Thet thars liquor in ther air close by."

As the last words were sung, the deep baying of a pack of blood-hounds suddenly arrested his attention; the "Shiner's Song" was not completed, for, turning, he saw through an opening in the forest, that they were on his track. His first impulse was to draw his revolver and defend himself; but his better judgment decided more wisely. A few yards ahead he espied, near the fence, a large chestnut tree. He sprang onto the fence, then into the tree, and none too soon; for as he cleared the lower branches, the dogs snapped viciously at his heels.

From his position, looking over the surrounding shrubbery, he discovered an old log house; the foundation stones were covered with moss,





“HE REELED AND WITH A GROAN FELL AT HER FEET.”







the walls matted with blooming morning-glory vines. On the gallery in front of the door stood an old woman, in great agitation, waving her gingham sun-bonnet and shrieking at the top of her voice:

"Fer ther luv uv heaven, Tobe Sexton, come outin thet house, an' drive them infernel, blood-thirsty critters away frum yan tree. Thar's er man, er live human man, treed thar by them dorgs. I reckon ye'd sot thar an' let em eat 'im bodaciously up, 'fore ye'd budge an inch. I'd kill ther last critter uv 'em, if 'twar me. W'y er stranger darsent pass er long ther highway, fer fear thet Sexton's hungry hounds will grind him inter sausage meat."

Tobe Sexton leisurely sauntered out the door, and, in reply to the spirited outburst of his old maid sister, said: "W'y, by Jingo, Mandy, I never seed ye take on so since thet shoutin' spasm ye had at ther Brushy revival. W'y bless yer bones, them pups wouldn't harm ther man, no mor'n er baby."

Sexton strolled lazily across the yard to the chestnut; the hounds were tearing away the bark with their teeth, and viciously lunging against the fence, as if to up-root the tree, or have their prey.



"Pore old boys," he affectionately remarked, as he fondled the angry brutes. "I pon my honor, ef ye haint treed er coon in broad day light, I'm er liar. Well, who'd er thunk hit?" Shading his eyes with his hand, he peered up into the tree, apparently expecting to see some wild animal, but discovering a man, instead, he remarked: "Well, bless my life! thet beats Davy Crockett's ghost! er soldier, in er chestnut tree. I've hearn tell uv all kinds uv foragin', but this caps ther stack—stealing chestnuts in May. W'y bless yer soul, Sonny, they haint quit bloomin' yit. Come on down, ther dogs won't hurt ye, they'r harmless ez er baby."

"Drive them away, and I'll come down," replied Cliff, still holding his position in the tree.

"Go ter ther house, boys, ther last one uv ye, ther fun's all over," said Sexton, peremptorily shaking his fist at the dogs, which slunk away. Cliff slid down and laughingly remarked:

"The hounds gave me a terrible scare."

"They'r nothin' but put ons, and' pretends, but, in course ye didn't know hit, an', I low they'd fool most folks what didn't know their pecooliarities fer sport. But, 'what's agitatin' ther public minds at present,' ez John Lanktry said in his speech at Paintsville, is not dogs, but what busi-



ness er Yankee soldier has in these hyre mountains?" said Sexton, eyeing the stranger critically.

Cliff knew his salvation hinged on his answer, but he was equal to the emergency. Stepping nearer the man and speaking in an undertone, he replied:

"Can I trust you, or will you betray me, should I tell you a secret?"

Sexton's eyes twinkled with a deep glow of interest, as he answered:

"Podner, I don't like ther color uv yer cloze, but no man ever heard uv ole Tobe Sexton givin' away er secret ur turnin' states evidence. W'y by fury, burnin' in torment is too good fer ther man what would do either uv 'em. So, twixt me an' you, and' ther gate post, ye can proceed with yer confession."

Cliff leaned very near him and whispered:

"I am a deserter. At the out-break of the Spanish-American war, I volunteered, but three months of soldier life was enough for this chicken. I made up my mind at first opportunity to desert; so, when the train that carried our regiment to the South passed through Catlettsburg, Kentucky, I jumped off and concealed myself in the woods that night. The next morning I hid



in an empty car, which was on the way to White House; then I traveled on foot to where your dogs treed me."

Sexton who was impressed by the young man's sincerity, and blinded by his own prejudice against the Government, stepped headlong into the web that was so ingeniously woven for him. Not giving Cliff time to continue, he stormed:

"D—— good thing, sir! D—— good! I'm glad ye done hit, ye wuz er fool fer volunteerin' but er d—— wise man fer desertin'. By ther eternal, I'm yer friend, up one side an' down 'tother. All ther blue coats this side uv Spain can't git ye out uv Sandy County, if ye pin yer faith ter ole Tobe Sexton.

"What do you think I had better do?" asked Cliff, confidentially.

"Change them blue rags fer citizen's cloze, an' make yer home with me till danger's over. I kin find work fer ye, if yer pretty handy, an' got lots of grit," replied Sexton.

"Father, supper is ready."

Cliff turned, and saw standing on the gallery, in the full blush of budding womanhood, Lady Sexton. With a graceful movement, that thrilled him, she turned, and passed into the house. He was entranced in a study of that



beautiful face, that perfect form, when Sexton spoke:

"Come, stranger, let's see what ther wimen folks hev ter chaw on. I low yer appetite won't need no whettin' fer this meal's vituls."

At the supper table Cliff met "Aunt Mandy," Sexton's old maid sister, and Lady, his daughter. When all were seated, Sexton inquired:

"Stranger, what mout yer name be?"

With perfect readiness, Cliff answered:

"Henry Thogmartin."

A trite conversation followed and by his natural felicity of manner, Henry, as Cliff was called, and as he will be known hence-forth, stole into the good will of the whole family, so that they talked with as much freedom as if he belonged to their mountain brood. In the home of Sexton, he found comfort and warm hospitality, the rugged character of the Kentucky Mountaineer, and "a poetry of native growth which they had gathered when they very little thought of it, from the evergreen knobs, the mountain peaks and chasms, and at the very threshold of their romantic and dangerous abode."

In the evening as the twilight blended into deeper shadows, the family assembled on the gallery. Sexton took from its hanging his violin,



"Ole Bull," as he fondly called it, and, to his master touch, the instrument responded, at times lulling the soul into gentle moods, and, then at a turn of the air, tempting the feet to dance; while, through the star-lit air, the sweet strains of long ago tunes, so familiar to the pioneer settlers of the Sandy Valley: "The Forked Deer," "The Lower Blue Licks," "Money Musk," "Willie in the Low Ground," "Boating Down Sandy," and many others floated into the wilderness and mingled with the song of the night bird. When Sexton concluded, Henry asked to examine the instrument, and to the surprise of the family, rendered in a most enchanting style, "Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata," putting as it were his very soul into the melody. If his frankness and gentle manner had fallen short of winning their entire confidence, this extraordinary exploit had removed the last remaining tinge of suspicion; and from that time on, Henry was the idol of the family.

At the request of her father, Lady then took the violin and with natural grace and fine Italian touch, brought from the instrument such sweet chords, as she sang with purity of voice an old love song, that the tender emotions of Henry's heart were stirred into a glow of love for this



innocent mountain girl. She presented a glorious picture, this rustic beauty, haloed in golden moonlight—a picture that death, alone, could erase from the young detective's memory.

After that night, Henry occupied almost the place of a son and a brother in the hearts of the Sextons. The music had dispelled that reserve, that coolness, which holds the family aloof from the stranger; which makes the traveler feel the loneliness of the wilderness, although he be surrounded by a surging tide of human-kind.



## CHAPTER IV.

### A KENTUCKY FOURTH.



FOR three long, hot months the dreary drag of farm routine wore away. Henry had made several discoveries, and was slowly straightening out the tangled threads of a clue; however, his most important discovery was his love for Lady Sexton. He had taken a deep interest in her from the very first; her presence there among the rude mountaineers was to him, like friend meeting friend in some foreign country, when each least expected it. He had given her violin lessons, had told her of his home, of his mother and sisters, how he longed to see them; and, how she had made a bright spot in his memory, a spot that would remain long after he had left the mountains. He had never spoken to her of love; and, he little realized that the satin tendrills of affection for this mountain flower were entwining themselves about his heart—too strong to break



—too secure to be torn away. This happy dream might have continued much longer had it not been for love's ever guarding sentinel——jealousy.

One evening, while Henry and Lady were enjoying one of their musicals, on the gallery, some one on horse back rode up to the yard gate; threw his bridle rein over the gate post, and with a graceful swagger came toward the house.

"Mr. Thogmartin," said Lady, "this is Mr. Critendon Medley," The men shook hands, then Medley and Lady fell into a friendly conversation, leaving Henry "out in the cold," to use a common expression for it.

Critendon Medley was a strong, heavy, young fellow with a ruddy face, and snapping black eyes. He was dressed carelessly and wore a broad brimmed, high crowned, Stetson hat. His clothes were the regulation gray, "store cloze," so common in the mountains of Kentucky. His hair was black and straight, and as he talked he would, from habit, ever little while, blow his breath on his hands, wring them through each other, and then rub the palms together vigorously; as you have seen boys do on a cold, frosty morning. He had just returned from college at Lexington, where he had taken a business



course. This was his first visit to the Sextons since his return.

"I heard that you were home, and have been expecting you," said Lady.

"Judging from what I have heard, I don't suppose you have worried much about my not coming sooner," said he, looking at Henry and winking.

"Now what are you hinting at?" asked the girl, blushing.

"Oh, nothing," he laughingly replied, continuing, "Where's Tobe?"

"He and Aunt Mandy are out on the back porch, stringing beans," she answered.

"Well, let's go out and see them; I want to tell the Old Man, howdy."

They arose and went into the house. Henry was filled with bitter jealousy. It was then that he realized how much Lady Sexton really was to him. To, thus, see Critendon Medley come between him and the girl he loved poisoned his heart with furious hatred for the young mountaineer.

A sudden melancholy siezed him; he wished he was miles away. The air about the house was oppressive; the surroundings were ugly and contemptible.



He walked out into the orchard and tried to eat an apple, but it tasted bitter and he threw it down and ground it into the dirt with his heel. Then he went over to the fence, by the old dirt road that had led him to the Sextons, and stood with one arm resting on the top rail. His eyes turned wistfully away down the valley, in the direction of the far off Ohio. The night was quite dark, he could hear some hounds yelping on the mountain, chasing a fox. An old hoot-owl cried from down in the ravine; he imagined it was asking who had stolen its mate. A black cricket, under a stone near him, sang a lonesome song. A frog in the forks of an old apple tree croaked for rain. The moon rose slowly from behind the distant hills, and spread a mantle of gold over the "Sad Old Earth." Late in the night he saw Medley leave the house and ride away; then he stole noiselessly to his room and went to bed; but sleep came slowly to him that night. He could still hear the hounds barking out on the mountain. The moon-light came in a great shower through his uncurtained window; he lay watching the yellow light playing on the wall with the shadows from the leaves of a vine that clambered about his window. His thoughts ran riotously over the many changes that had



come into his life since he had been in the mountains. In fancy he reviewed the many strange people he had met; the peculiar faces he had seen; now, out of the host came the one face, of all faces in the whole world for him—the face of Lady Sexton. And while he was dwelling on this beautiful vision, stern reality forced itself upon him, and, there, staring at him reproachfully, was the commanding visage of Duty, and as he saw the coils of justice closely winding themselves around his protectors, his friends, he shrank from the awful fate that awaited them, and fell asleep, thinking: “Why should it fall upon me, to bring misery and destruction to this happy family?”

Early the following day Sexton remarked, “Thogmartin, there’s goin’ ter be er forth uv July picnic at Levica ter-day, an’ I lowed we’d better take it in; what do ye say?”

Henry replied that he would be glad to go. After breakfast they went, on foot, about five miles to the picnic. The event had been thoroughly advertised throughout the surrounding counties. Among the attractions mentioned were, a fight between a panther and a bull dog, a platform dance, a “blind-tiger”, (a place where moonshine whiskey is sold) a wheel of fortune, free ice water and plenty of “fiddlin’.”



When Henry and Sexton arrived, the little town already showed the quickened pulsation of business activity. People had been thronging into the village since dawn, in fact some living at a great distance had come the night before. Buxom country lassies came on horseback with their sweethearts, men of families came in jolt-wagons, bringing "ther old woman an' ther young'n's erlong," while the nearer residents "hoofed hit" (walked). All ages were represented in the gathering. The majority of the visitors, however, were young folks.

Store clerks hurridly built stands for the purpose of offering refreshments for sale; the town-cow drank from a vender's tub of lemonade, a razor-back hog stole a boiled ham from his scanty stock and ran with it into the creek. The town marshal, with his great shining star, and his five deputies, sworn in for the occasion, walked up and down the streets.

Aunt Mandy Sexton was there, too, with her keg of apple cider and her basket of home made ginger cakes, at "five cents er piece ur three fer er dime."

At the corner of the public square, in a spring-wagon, stood a man from Lexington alternately pulling teeth with his fingers, and selling patent



medicine. Two dogs engaged in an altercation under the vehicle and, during the excitement that followed, some one upset it. When the merriment thus provoked had subsided, a local jokey improved the opportunity by exhibiting a gray mule which he had trained to rear upon its hind legs and motion one forefoot, after the manner of shaking hands. This exposition of genius was interrupted by the appearance of "The Silver Cornet Band," which formed a circle in front of the principal tavern and proceeded to dispense those popular Southern melodies: "My Old Kentucky Home," "Nellie Gray," "The Southern Girl," and "Dixie." Thus the festivities of the day advanced.

Levica was a "dry town," no licensed saloons being permitted, but "Moonshine" (as illicitly distilled whiskey is called in the mountains of Kentucky) could be procured in a plentiful quantity from an old log house which stood on the out-skirts of the village. This structure and its occupancy constituted what is known in that locality as "a blind-tiger," while the mystic process of obtaining whiskey therefrom is dubbed "twisting the tiger's tail."

While the band was playing Sexton nudged Henry and giving him the wink to follow, walked



away from the crowd that had gathered to hear the music. The old man betook himself to act as Henry's guide and seemed to find a great deal of enjoyment in pointing out those things which he deemed of interest to his guest, occasionally adding spicy bits of local history.

"Thogmartin, would ye like ter twist ther tiger's tail?" Sexton asked when they had gone a little way. This Henry was most anxious to do, and quickly replied:

"Yes, how do you do it?"

"Come, an' I'll show ye."

Thereupon they went to the "blind-tiger"—an old two story log house, in the side of which was a small opening, about four feet from the ground, and perhaps four inches square. Through this opening, on an inside shelf, set an empty cigar box. Sexton dropped a silver quarter in the box and it forthwith took an excursion along the shelf, and disappeared through a curtain, inside the wall. Presently the box returned as if by magic, and therein, in lieu of the coin, was a half-pint flask filled with pure, native corn whiskey, as clear as the water that bubbles from a mountain spring.

While this slight-of-hand performance was going on inside, Henry was doing a little "turn"



of his own on the outside. He quietly slipped a piece of chinking from between the logs of the house, thus gaining a full view of the interior; but he was not expecting what he saw; for, to his consternation, he discovered Critendon Medley, administering to the wants of the "tiger."

After leaving the "blind-tiger" Henry and Sexton went to a beech grove a short distance from the village where the dancing platform, a floor made of rough boards elevated about six inches off the ground, was erected. On a broad, high bench placed at one side of the platform sat two blind fiddlers, locally famous for their music and their songs.

The dancing had not yet begun but at a pre-arranged moment the signal to open the ball was given. A young man with fiery red hair stepped upon the platform and shouted: "Get yer pardners fer ther first set." Immediately, four couples took their positions, the fiddlers struck up "Cotton Eyed Joe," and the young man with the fiery red hair yelled: "Honor yer pardners, corners ther same, jine hands an' circle ter ther left"—the dance was on.

A young woman of more than striking appearance attracted Henry's notice as he stood watching the dancers. She was perhaps eighteen



years of age, as lithe and graceful as a mountain pine, with a form primitively faultless. A ruddy complexion enriched by pure air and wholesome sunlight relieved with a wealth of golden hair, which hung down her back in plaits, completed her natural adornments. In fashionable attire she would have been beautiful but, gaudily bedecked, as she was, in response to her untutored taste, she was a wonder. She wore a bright red dress trimmed with green ruffles, a purple sash tied in a large bow around her waist, and a yellow ribbon around her neck; while an antequated black straw hat, lavishly trimmed with immense red and yellow roses and blue ribbon streamers, constituted her head-gear, and set her off in rivalry with the richly plumed birds of her native forest.

"Who is that young lady?" asked Henry. Indicating by a look the girl just described.

"That barfooted'n?" inquired Sexton.

"Yes."

"W'y that's Rose Blodgett. She's ole Meriday Blodgett, ther bee hunter's gir!; an' she's given up ter be ther champion hoe-down dancer twixt hyre an' Cumberland Gap."

"Why does she prefer to dance barefooted?"

"'Taint no preference, hits natural. W'y bless



yer soul that girl never sot foot in shoe-luther in durin' uv her life."

"Well I should think she would get splinters in her feet dancing barefooted on those rough boards."

"That's cause ye don't know'er. W'y ye couldn't drive er nail in'er foot," replied Sexton.

"That's strange," ejaculated Henry.

"Ye might think hits strange, but if ye knowed her daddy ye wouldn't."

"What about her 'daddy'?" asked Henry.

"O' nothin', only he never had er shoe, nur e' hat, nur er coat on in his life, an' he's seventy odd years ole," explained Sexton, going on, "an' he rambles eround through ther woods an' scales these knobs, coursins' bees, same ez er Rocky Mountain goat would, an' nothin's never fazed 'im yet."

"Is he crazy?"

"Crazy!" exclaimed Sexton in surprise, continuing, "no, boy! best read man in ther county. Studied twenty years to be er lawyer but give hit up fer bee huntin'."

"Isn't there danger of his getting snake bit, going through the woods barefooted?"

"Snake bit! ha! ha!" roared Sexton. "Well, not much! Howsomever that reminds me, once



he told me erbout er copperhead that tried ter bite 'im. Ole Meriday wuz out er bee huntin', an', all at once, ez he went erlong through er patch uv blackberry briars, 'spat' somethin' tuck 'im on ther heel. He kinder thought hit mout be er snake, an' stopped an' turned back ter see; an' shore 'nuf, thar, all quiled up, under er bunch uv briars laid er whollop in' big copperhead. Jist then er devilish streak possessed 'im, an' he concluded ter have some fun out uv that snake. So he stuck his heel up right in that old copperhead's face, an' no sooner had he done hit than, 'biff,' went ther snake's head er ginst ole Meriday's foot. Meriday jist stood thar waitin'. Purty soon ole copper wuz squared fer action an' 'whacked' ole Meriday's heel ergin. Meriday jist stood there, heel up, tantalizin' that snake. After er little hit cut loose an' struck his heel ergin. 'Thar stood ole Meriday, same ez before, heel up, waitin', but no snake come this time."

"Why?" asked Henry.

"'Cause hit crawled off an' died. Ole Meriday said hits brains wuz drove out through ther back uv hits head."

"Well by jupiter!" exclaimed Henry, "his heel must have been tough, but I don't see——"

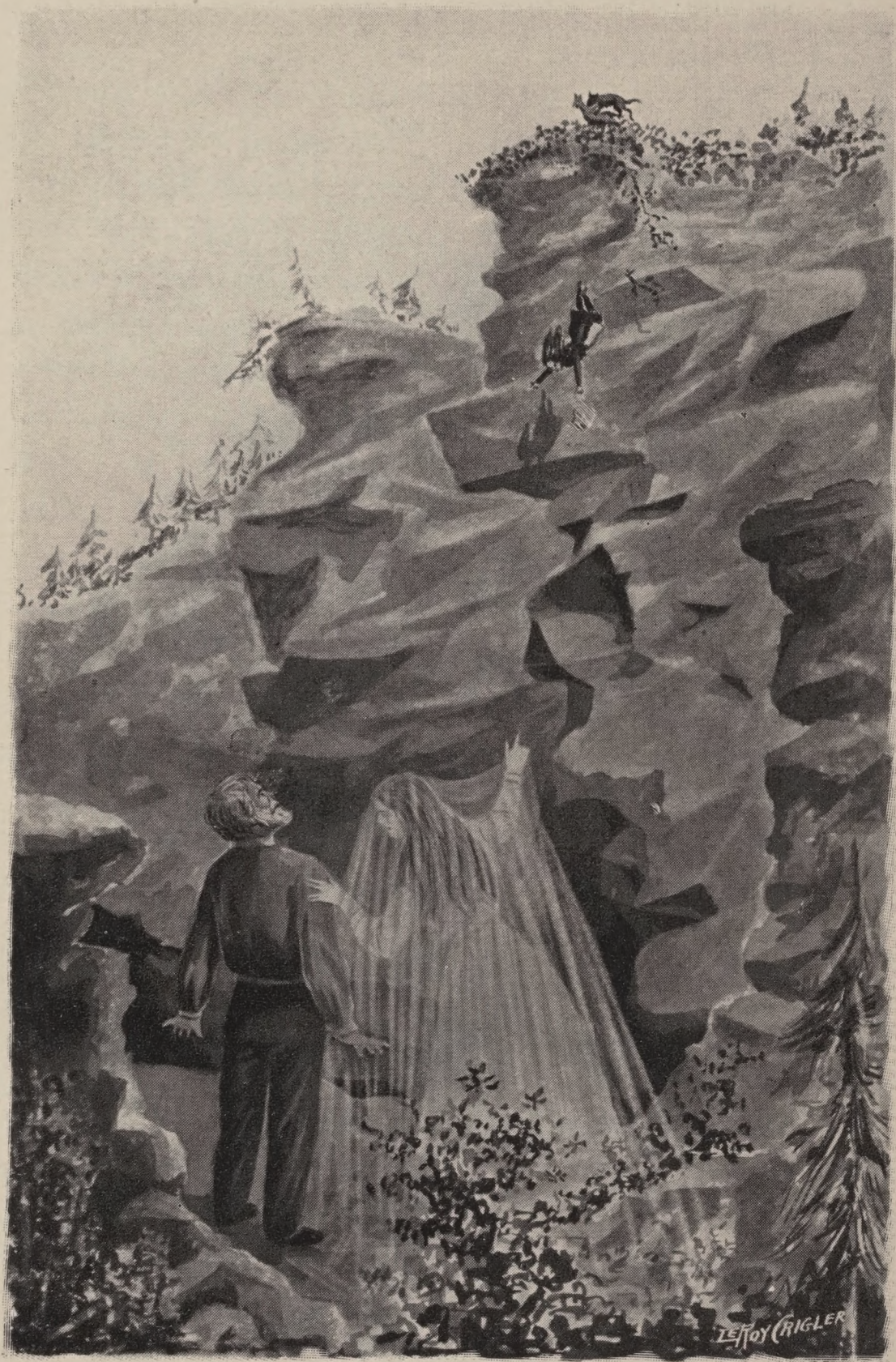


"Hello!" interrupted Sexton, "hyre comes ole Meriday now."

Henry turned and saw marching in front of the band, which was approaching, an old man, barefooted, bareheaded and coatless, wearing only a hickory shirt and cottonade pantaloons; (the latter being held in position by a pair of home knit yarn suspenders). Old Meriday walked in front of the musicians, directing them to the dancing platform. He carried a large book in his hand with which he beat time to the music. Following the band came a parade made up of the leading business men of the village, some local politicians, the members of one or two secret orders, and several hundred spectators.

Dancing was temporarily suspended, the platform was converted into a speaker's stand, the band took its position in the rear, while the bench previously occupied by the blind fiddlers was removed to the front. When all arrangements were completed the band played "Suwanee River." Old Meriday Blodgett then climbed upon the bench, carefully adjusted his spectacles, mopped his brow with his red bandanna handkerchief, and slowly and solemnly began reading 'The Declaration of Independence from the large book which he carried with him. When he had fin-





“IT POINTED TO AN OVERHANGING CLIFF,  
THREE HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THEIR HEADS.”







ished, the band amid the applause of the multitude rendered "America." Following this, the leader of the band stepped to the front, accompanied by a tramp printer, whose weight could not have exceeded one hundred and ten pounds, and whose age was doubtless no more than twenty-one years, while an abnormally developed head ornated with a superabundant crop of "football" hair formed his most predominating characteristic. This young man had been imported into the community for campaign purposes and given editorial charge of a defunct newspaper plant, which had become the property of a "prominent citizen" in exchange for his signature on a note.

Notwithstanding this worthy journalist's limited residence in the community, scarcely six weeks, he had constructed imaginary railroads up every hollow in the county, bored oil wells along the river for twenty miles, borrowed seventy-five dollars from a local candidate, realized on a "string" of fake news a rod long "sent in" to the city dailies, while "other counties were yet to be heard from."

"Gentlemen and Ladies," began the leader of the band, but was interrupted before he could go further, by a nudge from the young printer.



After a little hesitancy, the musician resumed:

"Ladies and Gentlemen:" here he halted, but not being interrupted went on. "It affords me unbounded pleasure to present to you a gentleman newly in our midst, but who comes highly recommended; a man in character immaculately moral; in intellectual capacities a giant, and, to our community of inestimable worth. Those of you who have been fortunate enough to meet this gentleman know to whom I refer—know how true are my words, yet how inadequate. Those of you who have not known him will live to express your thankfulness for being brought within the sunlight of his glorious nature.

"Ladies and Gentlemen: I present to you, J. Edward Linville, formerly one of Ohio's noted journalists, at present editor of the Sandy County Scout. It is my pleasure to say, Ladies and Gentlemen, that Mr. Linville will favor you with a few extempore remarks, relatively pertinent to this patriotic occasion, and directly helpful to every progressive and well thinking citizen of Sandy County.

"I thank you."

The crowd set up a cry of "Linville! Linville! Give us Linville."

The Editor of the Scout mounted the bench,



carelessly pitched his hat to one side, cast a half smoked cigarette back among the musicians, pulled his sleeves up to his elbows, raised his right hand above his head, brought it down to his side with a sweep, and launched upon his "few extempore remarks."

"Fellow Citizens of Sandy County, Kentucky, Ladies and Gentlemen:

"It is not expected that I should stand before an assemblage so vast, so intellectual, and not experience the forbidding fetters of embarrassment while yet burning in my ears is that eloquent commendation spoken in my behalf by our illustrious band leader.

"Fellow Citizens, my remarks will, of necessity, be of a cursory nature. I will not strive by any flight of eloquence to flap my oratorical pinions against the blue firmament. Far from it; but, were it my ability I would weave into a poetical woof these sublime truths that lie at our very finger-tips. The pebbles we trod upon, the leaves over our heads, the forest trees, the brooks and hills, are fountains of eternal inspiration to the mind that can but compass them.

"Friends, on this natal day of American Freedom, when seventy millions of people are paying homage to that sacred document so ably



read by our own worthy Mr. Blodgett, one must feel the divine influence that brought forth from Patrick Henry those immortal words, 'Give me Liberty, or Give me Death.' In that single utterance, Fellow Citizens, lives the gist of Americanism. Every son of Sandy County possesses *the same*, I dare say, as abundantly as did ever Patrick Henry. 'Breathes there the man with a soul so dead, who never to himself hath said, this is my own, my native land?' " (Shouts of "No! No! No!" here silenced the orator.)

"Fellow Citizens," he resumed, "while no living man is more desirous than I to keep aflame the star of patriotism, I fain would bring to your notice other things—things near and dear to our own fireside. In looking over the exhaustive subscription list of the Scout," (three hundred names taken from the tax books) "I find that many of Sandy County's sons are voluntarily exiled, some seeking wealth in the frozen gold fields of Alaska, others fighting for their country's cause on the battle-fields of Cuba, while others abide in every civilized country of the globe.

"Do you realize, Fellow Citizens, the pleasure it affords those dear ones—those sons, brothers, cousins, and, may I say sweethearts, of some of



you? Do you realize, I ask, the joy of those dear ones, on finding the home-paper in their morning's mail? Could there be anything more desired, more gladly received by a boy thousands of miles from friends and home?

"Furthermore, friends, consider what it means to have a factor so potent as the Scout disseminating germs of morality, education and progress over this valley fifty-two consecutive times per annum.

"The Scout is no ordinary sheet, I am proud to say. Countryman, hear me! The Scout is a six column folio, patent outside, four columns of associated plate, two of sheared editorials, two of local ads, two of home-news, two of chained-lighting. What more could be desired? *Vivat Scotus.*

"Could the Scout have cast her search-light of civilization over Sandy County for the past twenty years where would it be to-day? But why discuss the past, when present contingencies so urgently demand our consideration?

"Fellow Citizens, pardon me, if a personal reference here should sound egotistical, but I would have it known that I have sacrificed a future full of gilded prospects, a life of ease and luxury, to come among you—to be one of you. For this I



seek no praise, ask no compensation save a mere pittance; but, friends, from a soul overflowing with sorrow I admit the existence of *some*, not so magnanimous as myself. To be plain, in yonder express office, famishing for liberty, lays a bundle of news-paper upon which the Scout must necessarily appear. The Express Company's worthy agent refuses to part with said shipment until six dollars and forty-five cents has been paid unto him.

"Friends, it is good to talk of patriotism but glorious to demonstrate it. That privilege is yours by saving from an untimely death the most red-hot moral agitator west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. In furtherance thereof I have here a number of souvenir cards of this memorable occasion, which I will exchange for twenty-five-cent pieces. Each memento will entitle the holder to read the Scout for the next three months without the exigency of borrowing it.

"Come forward, Gentlemen. Let us see who will be the first liberty loving citizen of Sandy County, Kentucky, to emblazon the Scout's roll of honor.

"I thank you one and all."

The stirring strains of "Dixie" blasted forth, and for the next quarter of an hour coins of all



denominations from nickles to half dollars literally rained into the editor's hands. The scene could be more fittingly compared to the rush made on the ticket wagon of the old-time circus when the "big show" is declared open, than anything else.

The life of the Scout was saved.

After this feature of the day's enjoyment the crowd straggled about from one place to another, some going to see the fight between the panther and the bull dog, others to the hotel for dinner, others played the wheel of fortune, and as dancing was again resumed many sought this means of enlivening.

The editor of the Scout was not again seen on the grounds until towards the close of the day when he reappeared in company with the band-leader. They came from the direction of the "blind-tiger" and walked arm in arm singing, "We won't go home till morning." Both were pretty well saturated with mountain dew.

The editor no sooner arrived at the dancing platform than his chivalric spirit asserted itself, and nothing would pacify him short of a cotillion with Rose Blodgett. She, good naturedly consented to dance with him. At a turning point in the set the editor was led to the edge of the



platform by two of the ladies, who, by a concerted action suddenly let him go. He landed on his back in the creek, that flowed at the rear of the platform. Everybody greatly enjoyed the joke, but none more than J. Edward Linville, himself, who declared he fully realized "the expedient to a good time."

The glorious Fourth finally wore away. Henry had by no means been idle during the day for in the language of the bee hunter, "he'd struck a course."

Rose Blodgett and Old Meriday had departed for home, so had most of the others. No where could be heard the patent medicine man's husky croak. The editor of the Scout and the band-master lay in an intoxicated condition in the woods near the "blind-tiger," the editor singing with all his lung capacity, the musician trying to inject morphine into his arm with a hypodermic needle, to "quell him aleetle." Drunken men rent the air with their delirious yells, fired revolvers and cursed the town marshal who had long since been carved into a bleeding mass and taken home to die.



## CHAPTER V.

### A TALK IN THE DARK.



S Sexton and Henry were on their way home, late that night, Henry remarked:

"I did not see Mr. Medley in town or anywhere on the grounds to-day. I thought you said he clerked in his father's store."

"He does, but, public days he finds better employment."

"What at?" asked Henry.

"I haint mench'nun no names; taint no use fer er hound to call er cur, 'dog,' but ergin ye'r in these hills sixty y'ars I calcurlate ye'll conclude thet all devils haint fiddlers nur all preachers haint saints."

"I don't understand what you are alluding to," replied the detective innocently, "but, from what I have heard I naturally came to the conclusion that Mr. Medley would one day be a great man in Sandy County, if not in the whole valley."



"'Thar's whar ye'r left; ye'r d—— badly out uv hit; he'll never 'mount ter nothin'; 'taint in 'im, his head's ez empty ez er beer tub when er revenue man's er round."

"He is a nice looking fellow."

"So's er skunk, but devlish pore company."

"You don't seem to be very much in love with him."

"No, I'm not; he's too d—— handy with his gun; dangerous ez er charge uv dynermite, too."

"Ever kill anybody?"

"Two, thet I know uv, but I've hearn thar wuz four notches on his gun barrel."

"How, self defence?" asked Henry.

"No, bushwacked 'em. He haint got ther nerve ter stand up, face to face, an' shoot; thet's the reason I hate ther unprincipled sneak."

"I'm surprised; he has the appearance of a gentleman."

"Yes," said Sexton, "but ye can't tell nothin' 'bout er tree by ther names cut in ther bark; many er good lookin' saplin' has er bad heart."

They walked on in silence. Sexton seemed to be in a deep study, occasionally clearing his throat as if to broach some subject, but still hesitating. Finally he cleared his throat vehemently and said:



"Thogmartin, ye've been with us nigh onter three months an' I haint seed nothin' shady outin ye yet. Ye may be er deserter, an' all thet, but ye haint no sneak. Ole Tobe's had his eyes on ye when ye never dreampt he wuz in er mile uv ye, but he's alus found ye full weight. Now, I'm goin' ter say ter ye what I haint never said ter no man since ther bloody days uv ther rebellion: Ez long ez ther's er meal's vituls in my house I'll divide with ye! Ez long ez ther's er catridge in my rifle, an' er finger able ter pull ther trigger Ole Tobe 'ill protect ye, my boy."

"We're sumthin erlike," he continued, "ther Revenue men would like ter hev Sexton sot his foot in ther trap; but he's too sharp fer 'em, an' I low they'd be powerful glad ter lay eyes on ye ergin; but ef ye stick ter ole Tobe ye'r safe ez er bank cashier in Canada; an' ter make er long story short, I've er propersition ter make ye, ef ye'r agreeable, in course I don't spect ye ter 'cept hit, lessen ye feel like hits ter ye'r edvantage."

Henry, after a little hesitation, replied:

"Well, Mr. Sexton, in view of all the kindness you have shown me and what you have just said, you could hardly make a reasonable proposition that I would not agree to"—without waiting for him to continue the old man commenced:



"I thought not, suh, w'y by fury, I kin tell er man every time, thet's got the right stuff in 'im. How'd ye like ter learn counterfitin'?"

"I don't know," answered Henry, "is it dangerous?"

"No, unlesson ye spill ther hot metal on ye."

"Oh, I didn't mean that, I had reference to the law," quickly responded Henry.

"Wall, not so much, ef yer right peart," said the old man.

"Well, I'll risk it, once, if I lose."

"Thogmartin, ez long ez ye'r faithful ter Sexton ye'r safe; but, remember this, ez sure ez thet panther screams on yander mountain, so sure will death claim ye ef ye ever betray him."

They came to a turn in the road; an old house rose up out of the darkness; a tiny light flickered in one of the windows; some deep voiced dogs bayed and lunged against the kennel door; an old rooster out in the hen-house proclaimed the hour of mid-night. The old man being anxious to get to bed, the conversation terminated for the present.





MOONSHINERS DROPPING A DETECTIVE INTO THE "LOWER REGIONS."







## CHAPTER VI.

### LADY AND MEDLEY QUARREL.



LACKBERRY picking season had arrived and the Sextons were early astir. Aunt Mandy Sexton had engaged in the town of Levica, one hundred and fifty gallons, and besides, had contracted with the local dentist, to pay in blackberries for a "full set uv store teeth," as she expressed it. Some people unacquainted with Aunt Mandy, might consider this a big undertaking for one woman, but had they known her as did the citizens of Sandy County, they would not have doubted her capacity to fill the contract. It was generally conceded that she could pick more blackberries in the same length of time, than any five people that ever went a "berryin" in the Sandy valley.

Henry was put to delivering the berries. He used a two-wheeled ox cart, the bed of which held twelve three gallon pails, which were filled and taken to town twice a week. On one of these



trips Henry exchanged his watch for a fine violin, which he presented to Lady as a birthday present. The evening following the presentation of the violin Critendon Medley called. Lady, little dreaming of what trouble her action would bring, hastened to show Medley the violin, saying:

"See what a nice birthday present Mr. Thogmartin gave me?"

He took the instrument, turned it over indifferently and handed it back to her without a word.

"Don't you think it real nice?" she continued.

"Uh-hu," he grunted.

"Well, arn't you glad he gave it to me?" she urged.

"I s'pose I am, but I don't like to have this Thogmartin flaunted in my face every time I come here," he suddenly growled.

"Why, you'r not jealous are you? He is like a brother to me, and I think no more of accepting a present from him than I would from father."

"Where did this fellow who steps into a family circle a stranger and takes the place of a brother, come from?" he demanded.

"I don't know where his home is, he just came here one day and since then he has been as one of our family," replied the girl.



"How did he happen to come and what's his business in Sandy County?" Medley inquired with more interest.

"If I'll tell will you promise to keep it a secret?" she asked; but, had she known what effect that question would have on those who were dearest to her, she never would have asked it. How often an innocent girl by a slip of the tongue betrayed the one whom she loved the best. It was no less in this instance.

"Of course I won't say anything about it," he easily prevaricated.

"Mr. Thogmartin is a deserter from the army and came here for safety, and I hope they will never find him," said she, her eyes filling with tears; this, Medley observed and in subdued anger wrung his hands, and rubbed their palms together until they were, doubtless, as warm as his blood, which to judge from the color of his face at that moment, must have been boiling.

"A de-ser-ter," he said contemptuously, "then that's the kind of 'cattle' you take into your family, is it, and claim a sister's affection for?" he continued with a sneer.

The tears faded from the girl's eyes; an angry gleam had supplanted them; and, with a haughty toss of her pretty head she retorted:



*"If he is cattle, he is not the scrubby, mountain pea vine nipper, Mr. Medley—he's blue grass stock."*

This shot went home; Medley was very sensitive on the subject of being a mountaineer; but the insinuation that he was a "pea vine nipper," harrowed his very heart, and with jealousy rankling in his breast he walked back and forth across the gallery, rubbing his hands more than ever. Finally he turned, and giving Lady a defiant look exclaimed: "Lady, you are false to me! you know you love this deserter!"

The girl had never, in her most romantic imagination, considered Henry in the light of a lover; but the imputation was so unexpected that it brought the blood rushing to her face—her cheeks fairly aflame. She was so angry that discretion had no place in her thoughts, and disregarding the effect her words would have, she acted very unwisely.

"Critendon Medley, you are a jealous fool!" she cried, "I'm glad you showed your hand before it was too late."

Lady was very indignant as she stood, nervously tapping her heel against the floor, and looking off toward the tall pines on the moun-



tain crest. He took off his hat, scratched his head nervously, hesitated a moment and said:

"Lady, let's end this quarrel, I'll get the license and bring the preacher over tomorrow and have it over with, what do you say?" His manner showed decided meekness as he awaited her answer.

"I say no!" exclaimed Lady, "I'd as leave marry Satan, expecting to keep out of torment." His meekness had encouraged her; she was in no mood to relent; all her womanly contempt for narrowness in men asserted itself and with queenly dignity she stood awaiting the effect of her last throw.

Medley replaced his hat, passed his hand over his brow, and stared at the ground in silence. It was plain to see that he was agitated.

Out in front of them in the yard a turkey gobbler strutted, and raked his wings against the ground, and in his lordly glory gobbled so loudly that an old hen cackled excitedly to her brood of young ducks and hurried with them into safer quarters.

"Lady," said Medley, menacingly, "you'll rue this day's work, and wish a thousand times you had back what you've said to me."



"Ah, a threat—a coward's weapon," she said scornfully.

Medley without replying, turned and walked dejectedly to the gate; mounted his horse; gave it a sharp cut with his riding whip and galloped away. Lady stood watching him until he disappeared, then with her head held high she walked into the house, accidentally turning a chair over just as Aunt Mandy came in from the kitchen. The old woman without noticing Lady's agitation exclaimed:

"Not this year, Missie! No marryin' fer ye fer enuther twelve mont's; hits er never failin' sign, honey; W'y wusn't Sis Patton ingaged ter er fine young man an' didn't she turn er chair over an' lose 'im slick ez er button? W'y in course she did."

Lady was in no mood to be teased and the good humored jest of her aunt which was intended to amuse, had the opposite effect. The girl sank into a chair and gave way to her emotions. Her aunt, thinking Lady was affected by her joke, sought to pacify her.

W'y bless ther heart uv ye honey," she went on, "yer ole aunt didn't mean er word uv hit. W'y laws hev mercy, chile, ther haint nothin' in signs, an' sech, no how; don't take on so, land uv



liberty, don't ye know er girl what's purty ez ye air can marry at ther drap uv ther hat, an' not half try. W'y Sis Patton married three times twixt January an' July an' wuz er grass wider thet comin' Fall."

"I don't want to marry," sobbed the girl.

"Well what under ther Lawd Almighty's heavens ails ye then, honey?"

"Crit Medley is jealous of Henry and went away mad."

"Well, I hope ter God, he'll stay erway—ther very idee! who's he, ter be spunkin' up kaze ye happened ter look at some'n else? He's no manner er count, nur wuz his father er fore 'im. I knowed 'em every last one, an' hit wouldn't s'prise me ter see Mr. Crit yanked any minit fer what he's done already. The Devil's huntin' kinlin' wood right now ter bile 'im over. W'y taint no use talkin', that man would commit murder fer er hound purp. Hit's dogs fust, an' dogs last with er Medley. Crit's grandaddy up an' traded off ther last milk cow on ther place fer er fox-hound, an' erbliged his own young'n what wuz on er bottle, ter wean hitself er starve. Heavens knows I'd rather see ye buried in er muddy grave yard on er rainy day, than ter see ye marry Crit Medley."



Lady brushed the tears from her cheeks and meditatively said: "He threatened Henry."

"I lay he's mean ernuf ter do hit; but he knows yer pap too well fer ter harm Henry. He knows Tobe could put 'im whar they don't 'bush-whack revenues,' ef he so much ez crook his finger."

"Who bush-whacked revenue men?" asked Lady in surprise.

"I haint menchnun no names; but I lay if he hadn't been so handy with his Winchester them two revenues what wuz killed, down ther road yander, last summer, would hev been enjoyin' good health this minit."

"My God! Aunt Mandy, is that true?" exclaimed Lady holding to the chair for support. She had no idea that Medley was so bad a man. They had been playmates before she went away from the mountains. She had always remembered him as her boy sweetheart, and during her vacations which were spent at home, his calls were welcomed and his love encouraged. But, after all her dreams, she must watch her cherished fancies fade and the blood-stained soul of a murderer take their place. It was a terrible shock and she reeled under it, but there was no place for a murderer in her heart.



The old woman noting the agitated look on the girl's face hesitated to answer. Lady looked at her imploringly and again asked:

"Aunt, is it really true?"

"Ez true ez gospel, my child! I knowd hit would hurt ye ter hear hit, an' I've dreaded, these many days, ter tell ye, but,—

At this moment, the detective who had overheard most of their conversation, stepped into the room breaking up this conversation, which, doubtless, would have brought to light more of Medley's dark character. The old woman remarking, "hits nigh onter grub time," went into the kitchen leaving Henry and Lady alone together.



## CHAPTER VII.

### BUZZARD ROOST GULCH.



HENRY had been wishing for an opportunity to tell Lady how much he loved her. Ever since Medley had aroused his jealousy, he had been hovering between love and duty; he had censured himself for being so weak as to fall in love with this girl; he had tried to harden his heart against her. He would develop the few hidden parts of his clue, then say farewell to the mountains; this he had decided time and again to do; but one look from those eyes, one smile from those lips and all his fine resolutions went glimmering; and once more he would find himself kneeling at her shrine, shivering, cold, freezing to death, for one spark of her love. Now, here was the opportunity he had longed for; but, she was so distant, so sad, he could find no encouragement; his warm words of love had frozen in his throat; he could not give utterance to them. "Ah, the violin," he



thought, "music will warm her soul and light her heart with love."

He handed her the violin, the one that had caused so much trouble, and asked her to play. She pulled the bow across the strings with a graceful movement that thrilled him, but from the instrument there came a wail of grief, a tone of sadness, the most pathetically wierd melody he had ever heard. Every note was grief laden, every tremor told of sorrow. Henry felt keenly the guilt of his perfidy. Was it the shadow of the coming doom that darkened the pure and happy life of this sweet girl, he wondered. He was about to give up his purpose then and there and set about to restore to her eyes the light of gladness, to dispel from her heart those darkening shadows. When the piece she was playing was finished he would tell her all, beg her love, ask her to marry him, and if she consented they would go away, far from the melancholy mountains, out into the gay and merry world; but, if she refused him, then, come what might, it would all be alike to him, and the sooner his thread of life was snapped the better. But these somber thoughts were doomed to die unuttered; for as the last notes of that soul-agitating air died away, Sexton entered the room



and engaged the detective in a conversation, which took up the remainder of the evening, resulting in Henry being persuaded to accept, at the close of the berry season, the position of "malt grinder" in Sexton's illicit distillery.

August came and with it the dry, hot days of summer. Whirlwinds chased each other up and down the dusty road. The blackberry crop had been reduced to a few straggling red ones, too sour for use, too indifferent to ripen. Henry had taken the last cart-load of Aunt Mandy's berries to town late one afternoon and was slowly trudging homeward, in a path by the roadside; while his oxen were picking their way along the rocky creek-bed road. The ever hanging shadows were deepening into darkness. A brown thrush with an alarming rustle, fluttered across the ravine. A screech-owl sitting in an oak bush uttered a hideous cry, then flew away into the laurel thicket that shrouded the mountain sides which, like dismal walls, towered above the road.

These gloomy surroundings awoke in Henry the slumbering fever of home-sickness and from memory's store he drew a picture—a family circle—far away:

Yes, there on the lawn under the massive



shade trees where he had played from infancy sat his mother, eagerly scanning the evening papers, was she searching for news of her boy? Yes, he knew she was, for never a word had he written home. He thought he saw a tear steal down her dear old cheek. He would write to her this very night, he said to himself, and turned his eyes away. They fell on his two sisters, one swinging in the hammock, the other reading a book; the vision was so real, so home like, that fancy bore to him the sweet perfume of the many flowers that bloomed in the old garden back of their stately residence in Baltimore. There, on the broad veranda, hanging to one of the columns was the bird cage, and in it he could see Bob, his mocking bird, caroling as gayly as its wilder brother did at mid-day in the laurel bushes along this gloomy highway.

The oxen in a fright shied to the opposite side of the road, startling him from his revery, and crying, "Wo-ho, boys," something caught his foot, he stumbled, and fell headlong into a snare of tangled barbed wire; the sharp points pricked his flesh in a hundred places, and in scrambling to free himself, he lacerated his hands; he could feel the warm blood trickling down his fingers.



Rough hands were then laid hold of him and a man with a deep voice commanded:

"Hurry with the rope, boys, we've got 'im."

Henry struggled to free himself, but was no match for his powerful adversary.

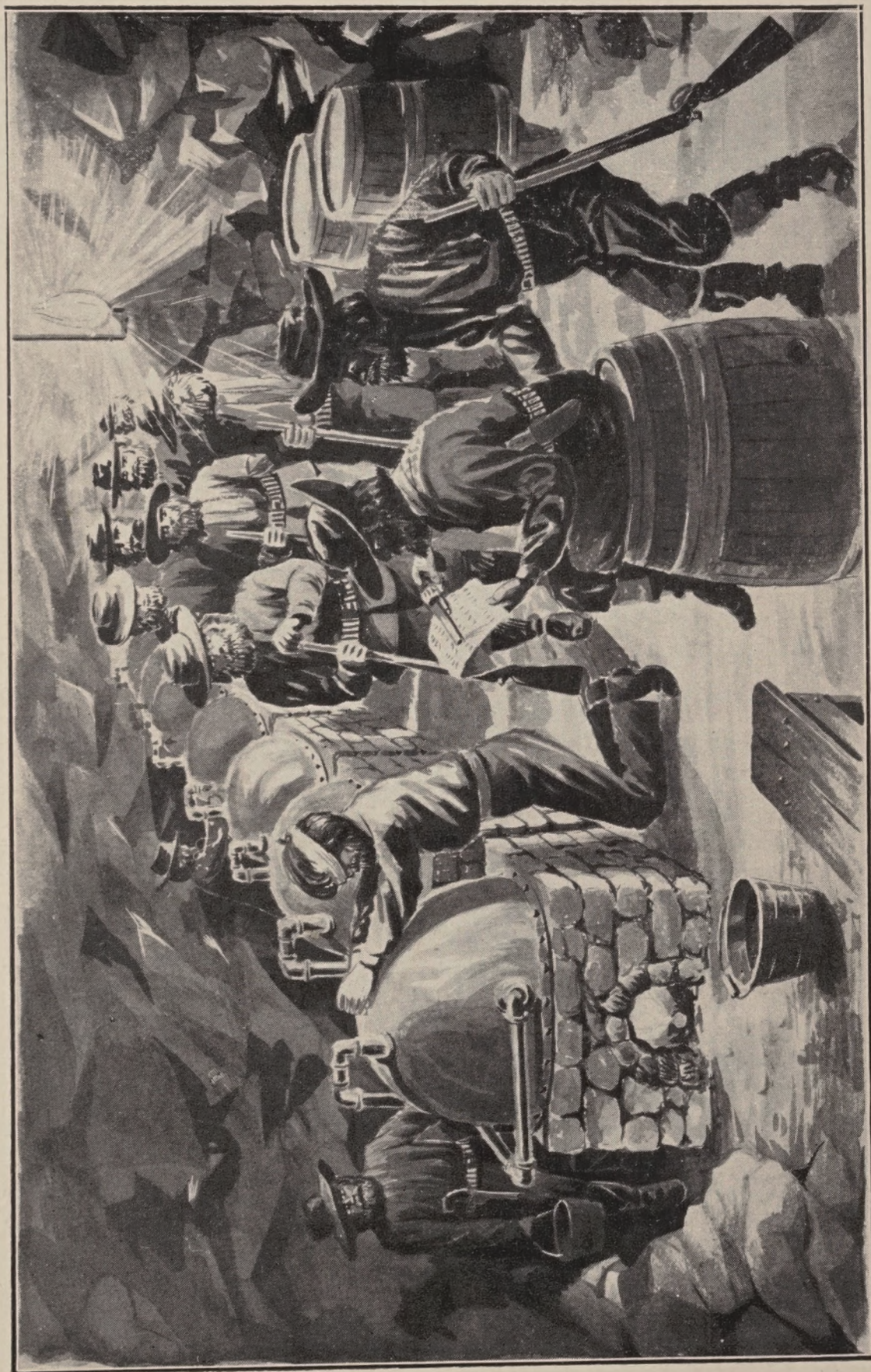
Three other men rushed upon him, they lifted him from the wires and threw him flat on his back on the ground, then the man of the rough voice forced a gag into his mouth, bound his hands behind him with a rope, and thrust his head into a bag, which was drawn tight about his throat.

"Git up, ye scoundrel," the man commanded, continuing: "Ye thot ye wuz playin' er powerful smooth game but ye'll find out erfore ye return frum this ja'nt, thet ye'r small taters an' not wuth diggin'."

Henry staggered to his feet. The man who had been talking gripped his arm tightly and half dragging him rushed away into the laurel thicket, the others closely following.

Aunt Mandy Sexton stood on the gallery for several minutes that evening, peering down the road, viewing intently some approaching object, the outlines of which were yet apparently indistinct. At length she sprang from the porch and hurried toward the gate. She stood a moment, still looking down the highway. Lady was now





TAKING THE OBLIGATION OF THE DIXIE SHINER'S, CAVE No. 432.







in the door watching her aunt. The old woman seemingly greatly troubled, turned toward the house, and seeing the girl cried:

"Here's ther oxen an' cart but no driver. Whar on yearth d' ye 'spose he is?"

Lady joined her aunt at the gate, and with concealed emotion, said:

"Oh, he'll be along in a little while, I guess."

"No, he won't," said the old woman emphatically, "I've been watchin' them critters fer this last half hour, as they come brousin' erlong up ther lane an' I lay somethin's happened ter him. If Tobe wuz here he could go and look fer 'im."

"Yes, but he is at the still, and will not be home until tomorrow evening. Oh, I do wonder what has happened to Henry!" exclaimed the girl.

"I haint never er tellin' ye, but I know'd this mornin', when thet bird flew in ther house thet somethin' dreadful wuz er goin' ter happen 'fore long. W'y bless yer soul, didn't er bird fly in an' light on ther bed post ther very day Sis Patton died?"

Lady was thinking of Critendon Medley's threat, and wondering if that had any bearing on Henry's disappearance, and half breathing her thoughts aloud she asked:

"Do you suppose any one has way-laid him?"



"Well, there's them ez is mean ernuf ter do hit, in this neighborhood. That makes me think," went on the old woman excitedly, "uv er conversation I over-heard t'other day, when I wuz blackberrin' down yander at the mouth uv Buzzard Roost gulch: Some men war talkin' out'n ther road; I stopped pickin' an' listened; one uv'm said:

" 'Here'll be er good place, we could take 'im up Buzzard Roost an' keep 'im till we get our reward;' an' I wuz er goin' ter tell ye, but hit slipped my mind."

"My God!" exclaimed Lady, "what will we do? Of course, they meant Henry."

"Ther haint nuthin' we kin do, an' ther Lord only knows what'll become uv 'im ef he's in ther clutches uv thet Buzzard Roost gang. W'y, there's not er man in hit thet wouldn't murder er whole family fer a gallon uv whiskey," replied Aunt Mandy dejectedly.

"I know every tree, every rock, and every cliff up Buzzard Roost. I learned them years ago, when father was hiding there and I carried his meals to him," said Lady with a look of hope and determination lighting up her face, as she continued, "I will go this night and rescue Henry from that



murderous band of outlaws!" she exclaimed with flashing eyes.

"Ye, child! Ye, go er lone at night ter Buzzard Roost cliffs? W'y ye'r foolish! Ye wouldn't live ter git half way."

"You do not know me, aunt, I am determined. My father would go, were he here, and if the young man is worthy of my father's aid, he is worthy of mine. I will go!" cried the girl.

The old woman stood awe-stricken.

The girl hurried to the house, took from a drawer a revolver; she then slipped into her rubber storm coat and rushed to the kennel, unlocked the door and entered.

The great beasts raved and lunged against their chains, but a kind word from her and they were as quiet as kittens on a hearth.

She went directly to the largest, a most ferocious beast, the size of a lion, a mixture of bloodhound and wolf-hound. She snapped a lead-rein into the dog's collar, then released him from the chain. The creature cleared the door with a bound; but, a gentle command brought him to a standstill. She then locked the door and said:

"Down the road, Dum, but not too fast."

Away they glided into darkness. Heavy clouds hung over head, and no moon or stars



were visible. Down the road they rushed, the hound with his nose to the ground, his tail up and with that peculiar rolling motion led her onward into the creek-bed road.

The dog went more cautiously now. They were nearing the mouth of Buzzard Roost gulch; her dress caught on a briar, she stopped to loosen it and tore her fingers on the sharp beards of a barbed wire. She found a strip of cloth hanging to the barb; this she pressed to the dog's nostrils.

The hound gave a lunge and with a low whine darted into the laurel thicket, almost jerking her to the ground. She tried to restrain him; his speed slackened some; but he pulled swiftly ahead, half dragging her, as onward they went up the dreadful gulch.

Once through the thicket the way was less difficult to follow. The dog led by the scent, soon found the main path to the cliffs.

For an hour the journey was unbroken. The hound, at times, would rear up and try to free himself, so anxious was he to forge ahead. He apparently knew the danger of delay, and was striving with all his might to convince his mistress of his opinion.

Lady, spurred on by excitement, had undertaken this perilous search without considering the



great danger of it, now, that her emotions had subsided; the darkness, the loneliness, the awfulness of her venture began to crowd in upon her reason. Caution told her to return; but the eagerness of the dog led her on.

The gulch was narrowing now. Rocks and logs impeded her progress; the dog hesitated and jumped from one rock to another, as if about to lose the trail; saw-briars tore her tender flesh, and in jumping from a stone she strained her ankle. For a few minutes she was unable to go on; but, the soreness left after a little, and she hobbled onward.

The gulch at this point terminated in a steep gully that extended up the mountain.

Here it was necessary to begin a terrible ascent; over fallen timbers, boulders, and through the heavy growth of underbrush.

A hundred feet above was a semi-circle of cliffs and caverns.

Lady could no longer walk erect; but was compelled to crawl and pull up by the shrubbery. She felt faint and tired and could go no further. For awhile she lay resting on the mountain side; the dog with his great red eyes turned on her, sat with lolled tongue, panting and whining impatiently.



Turning her eyes heavenward, she breathed a silent prayer.

The rashness of her act was dawning upon her, and fear beat furiously against her strongly fortified walls of resolution.

A large drop of water fell on her face, one of those harbingers of the long restrained summer rain, which knows no relenting until its fury is spent. A low rumbling sound followed by a flash of distant lightning played across the heavens; a gentle breeze murmured through the pines; out from a crag across the gulch, scarcely a hundred feet away, a panther screamed, one of those hair-raising shrieks, so human like that one instantly thinks of a mad-house.

The hound sprang to his feet, tore up the declivity, pulling the girl, bodily, over the rough stones. She clambered after him, reeled and fell; but caught on the point of an overhanging rock, and the next step brought her safely onto the ledge that circled the mountain in front of the first row of cliffs. She smoothed the dog's hair and calmed him, then moved cautiously around the crag.

The wind was now moaning through the spectral pines, which swayed back and forth, lapping their long arms against the rocks, making a dis-



mal screeching wail; and, mingled with this came a far off deep roaring as of tossing billows. Nearer and nearer it came and louder and louder grew the appalling sound. A gleam of forked lightning leaped across the gulch, making a great flaming gash in the darkness, and illuminating the circle of gasping cliffs and reeling pines. A terrifying crash of thunder, following instantaneously, shook the mountains and reverberated from crag to cliff, and finally died away, far down the gulch.

Then with sudden vehemence, the long delayed rain came down in sheets, swayed by the fury of the blast which tore the stately pines from their footing and hurled them over the precipice like straws.

Lady shrank back into one of the cliffs, the dog following. No sooner were they well under cover than the dog reared on his hind legs, growling and snapping at something perched on the shelving rocks at the back of the cavern. Then followed a rustling, fluttering, flopping noise, and a covey of turkey-buzzards, swarmed around the girl, striking her with their wings. They flew out into the night air, but the storm beat them back again. Flapping the enraged hound out of their way they huddled into the deep



crevices of the shelving rocks. An indescribable nauseating odor, found only in a buzzards roost, poisoned the atmosphere to such an extent that the dog became stupefied and crawled to the entrance and greedily gasped the fresh air. The girl sat on a stone near by stroking his back.

The rain unabated continued throughout the night; but at last the heralds of coming dawn chased the clouds away. The rain had slackened and the pure and wholesome air rustled among the leaves, while down the gulch the torrent swept tufts of earth, stones and fallen timber, with a booming roar.

The hound, ever impatient, not waiting for the rain to entirely cease, got up, shook himself and was out on the ledge sniffing the rocks in search of the trail; but in perplexity he turned and ran here and there scenting the air in bewilderment and finally whining as if he had given up the trail looked at the girl imploringly.

The rain had washed away the trail. Lady realized the situation and was trying to solve this new problem, when the dog with a low growl started on around the cliffs. She held him back, listening; she heard the murmur of voices, then approaching footsteps. She dragged the hound back into the cavern and making him lie down,



held her hand over his mouth. He had been taught thus to lay low and quiet. As the footsteps drew nearer and the voices more distinct, the dog trembled and tried to get up; then, by the gray morning light, she saw two men pass, going toward the gulch.

Waiting until they were beyond ear shot Lady again ventured out. The dog started in their pursuit, but she turned him in the opposite direction; whereupon, he took up the trail and was again guiding the girl on her perilous journey; and none too cautiously either; for excited by the freshness of the scent, the hound sped onward so swiftly that it was necessary for Lady to run to keep pace with him.

As they rounded a protruding stone that narrowed the pass-way almost to the edge of the precipice, a loose rock was toppled over and went crashing through the tree tops below.

Almost instantly a man came running from a cavern near by and with a terrific lunge the dog tore loose from the girl and went for him. Onward the great beast pressed and before the suspecting victim was aware, he was borne down, and in the struggle that followed, was thrown over the precipice.



Another man attracted by the noise ran out and not seeing the source of combat rushed beyond the dog, which bounded after him, chasing the now thoroughly terrified wretch around the crag.

Lady, seeing no one else emerge, glided into the cliff, there before her lay Henry bound hand and foot. She knelt at his side and tried to free him, but the ties would not yield to her heroic efforts. She wrung her hands and in desperation tore the gag from his mouth.

"What must she do? Time was never more precious. The next moment might mean death to him, yes, and death to her, too; she would die now or save him," these were her thoughts.

"My God! Look out!" cried Henry.

Lady Sexton sprang to her feet. A horrifying sight confronted her: There, not forty feet away, came the man madly pursued by the dog. He held in his raised hand a large dangerous looking bowie knife. She scanned the cavern for a weapon, then thought of her revolver and grabbed for it. "Heavens! It is gone!" she groaned.

The detective was rolling over and over, struggling to break his fetters, but was powerless to assist the brave girl.

On came the man, he was making for his gun which leaned against the cavern wall. Lady, too,



rushed for the weapon. It was a race for life, but she grasped the rifle first. The man was, now, not a rod away and charging at her. She threw the gun to her shoulder and fired. He reeled and with a groan fell at her feet. The knife flew from his hand and rattled on the stone floor; she grabbed it and with two powerful strokes severed the ropes and Henry Thogmartin was again free.

“Come! Hurry!” cried he, “there are yet two other ruffians near; we must avoid them.” Without saying any more they quickly left the cliff, and were soon following a secret path that led to Sexton’s home.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### SEXTON HAS A DREAM.



DEEP in the heart of one of those gigantic peaks of Sandy County, there is a cave; and, it was here that Sexton, on that eventful night, sat watching the crystal beads of apple-brandy, which, after their winding journey through the snake-like coils of the stillworm fell drop upon drop, into a copper measure. The sweet aroma of the new made liquor stole through the cavern with a lulling gentleness that soothed the old man into cheerful retrospection. Mechanically he, ever and anon, emptied the measure into a keg.

Longer grew the interval between measures, and to hasten the lonely hours he filled his corn-cob pipe with natural leaf tobacco and lit it, then eagerly puffed great clouds of smoke out into the solitude, and blew them away into the dark recesses of the cave.



More reluctantly the tiny drops chased each other from the worm, until their splash was like the draining eaves.

Sexton yawned, rubbed his hand across his forehead and muttered: "Ther cat's er bout dead, er nuther turn uv ther cup'll finish this run."

Then, for awhile, he hovered along the gray crag-traced shore of consciousness, but gradually drifted further and further out into the sea of slumber, unmindful of the passing events of the outer world.

There he sat and peacefully slept, ignorant of the beating rain and raging storm, the descending torrent, and, heavens knows, he was ignorant of that hazardous venture in which his only child was then braving the wilds and terrors of Buzzard Roost cliffs. Who knows but at that moment she was lying faint upon the mountain, terror stricken by the panther's cry, or holding the hound's nostrils lest he betray her presence in the cliffs; or, again, rushing on to do battle with a gang of outlaws that Sexton, himself, with all his courage would have flinched to face; but she, impelled onward by the turbulent current of passion, would defy the terrors of a thousand deaths to rescue the man she loved.

Now the musical murmur of the simmering



still only broke the silence of the cave; the dripping brandy slid softly into the receiver; the old man's chin rested in his hand, his elbow on his knee, the pipe fell from his mouth. He slept. And, to him a vision came.

First he traced the form of angels in the floating clouds of smoke; then a figure of perfect beauty and heavenly grace drew nearer, until from out of the vapor stepped a phantom, life-like and real.

Had the wheels of time turned backward a half score years, they could have presented no truer likeness of his dear, dead wife. It was as if she stood there before him in the cave, beckoning him to follow her. Yes! it was she, as she had appeared years ago; arrayed in her dress of spotless calico, fitting neat as a pin, while down over her shoulders flowed her locks of raven black; but, the look of distress upon her face was strange to him.

In fancy he arose and followed her across the mountains; through the Needle's Eye pass, and down into the cliffs of Buzzard Roost gulch. Onward the vision led until they stood at the foot of the great precipice; then, with arm extended, it pointed to an overhanging cliff, three hundred



feet above their heads. He looked, and stood transfixed with horror.

The sight froze his blood. As rigid as iron were his muscles, nor could he move. Yonder, clinging to a vine, and already over the brink by a yard, hung his little girl, her small dinner basket on her arm; while, above her on the very edge of the rock a conflict for life was raging between a great angry panther and one of his own ferocious blood-hounds. The struggling beasts tore loose the vines that supported the child, and he thought he saw her fall, tumbling over and over, with the speed of a meteor down to hard earth.

With a powerful effort Sexton broke away from the night-mare. The overwhelming influence that had held him a horrified witness of that awful spectacle was gone. With a cry of agony he leaped to his feet and glared wildly around the cavern. He yawned, stretched himself and muttered: "I must hev been er sleep," and rubbed his swollen eyes as if to determine whether he was awake or yet asleep.

The still had long since boiled dry; the liquor had over-run the measure and his feet, soaking wet, stood in a pool of it.



He was bewildered; but the dream troubled him most of all, and, in vain, he tried not to think of it. At last, with a start, he picked up his pipe, pocketed it, extinguished the fire beneath the still, emptied the measure, shouldered his rifle, and with a searching look around-about, to make sure that the phantom was not there somewhere hiding, he hastened from his retreat. As he hurried out he mused:

“‘Thar’s nothin’ doin’ hyre. I mout ez well go home. I fear somethin’ dreadful’s happened.”

As he came into the open air the first rays of the morning sun greeted him; the rain-drops on the leaves and blades of grass sparkled like diamonds and a fresh and balmy gale waved the lacing bows over his head; but all the splendor of the scene was as far from his thoughts as the snow capped peaks of Siberia.

A little farther along a gray squirrel clinging head down to the trunk of a chestnut tree, barked saucily at him and shook her fine gray tail in a desperate effort to attract his attention; but he heeded her not. At any other time, he would have hailed with delight such an opportunity to prove his dexterous marksmanship by snipping her nose with a bullet, just enough to draw blood.





“HITS ALL MINE. HITS ALL MINE, EZ FER EZ YER EYES KIN SEE.”







With a thousand ominous forebodings haunting his mind he hurried along; fancying at times that his house was on fire; then, the thoughts of sickness would harass his whirling brain. By the time he was half way home his speed had quickened until he was fairly in a run, so sure was he that some dreadful calamity had befallen him. Never were moments longer to a man! A running briar which laid across his path caught his foot and tripped him; his hat flew into the underbrush; but in an instant he was up and away again, unmindful of his hat.

At last the gable of his own home loomed in the distance, and the view, like a sucking whirlpool, drew him madly onward across the fields and into the house.

His sister not expecting him until night, sat half asleep, nodding, in a rocking chair where she had been all night worrying about Lady. The poor old soul was so exhausted by grief that she was in no condition for a shock, and upon hearing him enter she turned quickly, and seeing him hatless, with his gun in his hand she gave a sharp scream, lurched from the chair, and fell full length on the floor in a dead faint.

The old man stood aghast looking at her. He tried to collect his scattered wits. He raised her



to the chair, slapped her face, and bathed her temples in camphor.

She opened her eyes and with a startled look began crying and waving her hand, shouting:

"I couldn't help hit! Don't tell me she's dead! She would go! Merciful God, save ther child!"

Sexton in great agitation exclaimed:

"Gone whar? Tell me quick! I know nothin' uv her. My dream! My dream! Oh, my child! Good God, whar is my daughter?"

"Yander, ter Buzzard Roost Gulch! She went last night ter hunt Henry Thogmartin, who was kidnapped by some'n, ther devil only knows who!" the old woman shrieked.

Sexton, without waiting to hear more, grabbed his rifle, and with his white hair waving in the wind tore from the house and hastened towards the cliffs. As he hurried through the thicket of laurel along the secret path, he, all of a sudden, met his daughter and the detective as they fled homeward from Buzzard Roost Cliffs. Then, the girl who had withstood the trials of that awful night; who had with the dauntless courage of a lion rescued her lover from a band of outlaws; and, who had with an unerring aim saved her own life; the girl who had done all these heroic things now, when all danger was over, and



she stood under the protecting arm of her father, true to her womanly instinct, gave way to her emotions.

"Oh, father! father!" she hysterically cried, and throwing her arms about his neck clung to him, until she fell limp and unconscious in his embrace.

Sexton bore the girl to the house and with simple restoratives brought her back to consciousness; but the great shock to her nerves was so severe that she recuperated very slowly.

The neighbors were soon apprised of her illness and she received the best attention that the kindest people in the world—"the rude mountaineers"—could offer.

A physician was summoned from Levica. He reported that she was in an extremely critical condition, but with perfect quietness and rest, he thought she would soon be out of danger.

That night Henry and Sexton sat in a closely blinded room. The detective gave the old man a complete account of all that had happened. Sexton was silent for a while, then arose and paced the floor excitedly; finally he turned facing Henry and said:

"Hell's broke loose ergin! but I tole ye, boy, I'd stand by ye, an' I'm goin' ter do hit, but de-



scree-shin is ther better part in valor. Them damn scoundrels'll wear holes in ther ground whar they lay erlong ther road waitin' ter git er shot at ye. I don't know what they want ye fer; but this much I do know: ye'r carcas won't hold shucks ef them' ar' bush-whackers git er crack at ye, with er 'Winchester.' Ye ain't safe but at one place in these knobs, an' that's at my still."

Some one came to the door and called Sexton out. He returned in a few minutes in a more cheerful manner and said:

"Ther doctor hes come ergin, an' says Lady's better." Without giving Henry time to reply, he continued:

"Ye must leave hyre ter night, taint safe fer ye ter stay hyre even an hour. I'll take ye ter ther still an' ye can stay thar an' work till things cam down er leetle; fer when them Buzzard Roost Hell-Cats find them two uv their gang thet's dead, up thar in ther cliffs, an' ye gone, they'll raise h—'round hyre. So ther best thing fer all parties consarned, ez fer ye ter be absent fer er while. I've killed six uv ther click, already, an' I'm gettin' old an' don't want ter shed no more blood till I die. They ar' liable ter come hyar ter-night, but, on Lady's ercount, I hope they won't."



"If they should come, what could we do?" asked Henry.

"W'y, boy, they wouldn't last ez long ez er snow-ball in h— ef they did. My friens ar' lain' eroun' this hyre house, this minit thick ez punkins in er patch."

A silence followed, which was broken by the detective, who said:

"Mr. Sexton, I don't want you to take any risk for me. I will leave your house to-night and take my chances. I do not intend to have you and your family risk your lives for me. Your daughter has already suffered too much. It is best that I should leave. These outlaws will not trouble you when I am gone, and you can live in peace again. I would lay down my life for any of you, but I would not want you to risk as much as one of your gray hairs for me. I will go." With this he got up and started toward the door.

The old man arose and placed his hands on Henry's shoulders and looking him squarely in the eyes said:

"Thogmartin, I like yer sentiments an' respect ye'r grit, but, I've er d— pore erpinion uv ye'r judgment. When Sexton is yer frien' he'd die fer ye. I love ye like I do my pore leetle gal



in yander in ther bed, an' when ye leave this house I'll go with ye."

The door opened and Aunt Mandy Sexton came into the room with a pair of home made linsey blankets rolled into a bundle and tied with a strip of red calico. The old woman was trying with all her might to suppress her emotions, but on seeing Henry she boiled over and between sobs said:

"Hyre--honey--take--these blankets. They'll keep ther rumatix outin ye'r bones, God knows yer Aunt Mandy don't want ye ter hev 'em."

"Mandy! My stars Mandy! Do ca'm ye'r self. This aint no funeral," said Sexton.

The old woman braced herself a little and said:

"Now Tobe Sexton, ye know thet child haint used ter sleepin' 'thout no kiver an' he'd be er snap fer ther rumatix; hits alus lookin' fer some shinin' mark ter take off, an' thets ther reason I fotch them blankets. W'y thar's nothin' like linsey blankets ter keep off rumatix. Didn't Sis Patton take down with inflammation rumatix, an' nuthin'ud do 'er any good but linsey blankets, an' I tole 'em so at ther fust start an' "—

"Come on Thogmartin," broke in Sexton, "Mandy'll be standin' hyre talkin' linsey blankets till doom's-day, if we listen ter 'er. We kin slip



out an' git ter ther still 'thout bein' seen ef we ar' quick er bout hit. Git ther blankets an' come on."

Sexton stepped through the door. The woman held out her hand to Henry, and with tears streaming down her kind old face, said:

"Henry, tell me good bye. I may never see ye ergin, hit brakes my pore old heart ter see ye go."

The detective took her hand and she gave him a parting grasp that told of a deep, motherly affection too plainly to be mistaken.

They followed Sexton into the adjoining room,—the one in which Lady lay sick. She was asleep.

"Wait till I go up stairs an' git some cater-iges," Sexton whispered. The old woman followed him out.

As Henry stood waiting, the soft moon-light stole through the open window and fell in pretty dapples over Lady's bed. A flood of it lit up her sweet face—pale and tranquil—a face as pure as the moonlight itself, but more like the visage of an angel than of a living creature, he thought. How different, too, her now peaceful beauty from that brave defiance, of the struggle at the Cliff. Animated then with all her earthly fire, she was a magnificent specimen of the most glorious living



creature—WOMAN—but now, wrapped in peaceful slumber, she was a dream of glory.

“What if she should die to-night, and I could never again see her lovely eyes aglow with life?” he mused. The thought tore away the bonds of emotion and, like a torrent that carries everything before it, the surging tide of love overswept his reason, drowning every thought but one: “What if she should die to-night?” It was more than he could bear. How could he leave her without a word; without a look; without a touch of her hand? The mere thought of the touch of her hand thrilled him. He looked at her again and fancied he saw a faint smile flit across her pallid countenance. That inexplicable influence, more of the spiritual than intellectual being, possessed him and seemed to say:

“You are going away from her; you may never again, in life, look upon that calm, sweet face. Can you leave her without some little token of affection? Can you, *after all*, leave her without some sign of love?”

“No!” he muttered, almost aloud. “I’ll touch her hand before I go.” And with a quick, soft step he crossed the room and stood by her bed. Her hands lay exposed across her bosom; he stooped to touch them; he felt her warm breath



upon his face; the room went round in a whirl; an angel stroked his hair; the world, like a great ball of trouble floating in a sea of bliss, drifted away from him; a delicious intoxication transformed a second of life into an age of heaven. Their lips touched. The world drifted back.

A moment later Sexton entered, bringing a couple of rifles. Handing one of the guns to Henry he beckoned him on, and with noiseless steps they left the house. Henry breathed a sigh as he took a farewell look through the window, where the moon-light stole.



## CHAPTER IX.

### OVER SATAN'S LEAP.



IN their journey they hurried. It was a long, dismal, winding path through a lonely forest, up the side of a dark steep mountain to a limestone crag, at its crest. They went along this crag until they came to a small crevice, in the wall of limestone, scarcely large enough to permit a man to squeeze through. Over them, hanging in the crevice, suspended by two small corners, swung a tall flat stone of stupendous weight. Once through the crevice, they emerged into a broad wooded plateau, known as The Chestnut Flat, where for miles around flourishes unmolested by the woodman's ax, a primeval forest of giant chestnut trees. On and on, deeper and deeper, into this grove of chestnuts they went. No longer could they hear the night hawk's cry of alarm, or the wild cat's scream; only the sad, sweet music of the wind, murmuring through the



chestnut boughs broke the stillness of the wilderness.

At last they came to a halt. Sexton drew a black cloth from his pocket, and turning to the detective said:

"Now, Thogmartin, I hev ter blindfold ye. I never take er man ter ther still open eyed, lessen he's been tried an' found sound clean ter ther heart."

After blindfolding Henry, the old man led him on across The Chestnut Flat, and up a mountain toward the summit of a solitary peak. Onward they trudged, higher and higher, till the air in a cold, sweeping draught fanned their faces.

Then as mysterious as a phantom, Henry was roughly seized by the shoulders and a deep voice demanded:

"Who persumed ter wander up Shiner's Peak, at ther dead hour uv night?"

Sexton: "A child uv ther outer world, what seeks more knowledge uv ther buried mysteries uv ther inner yearth."

The voice: "An' hes he ther solemn pass-word ter ther Shiner's Abode?"

Sexton: "No, but seein' ez how he ez qualified, I pray ye ter pass him on."

The voice: "What qualification has he?"



Sexton: "*He's er sympathizer uv our cause; handy with er gun; er deserter uv ther New Nited States army, an' er d— good fiddler.*"

The voice: "Ex'elen, most ex'elen! proceed with ther candidate."

Sexton led Henry on until they came to the top of a cliff, here a second sentinel challenged them, saying:

"In ther name uv ther Dixie Shiners, Cave No. 432, uv Sandy County, Kaintucky, I demand ye ter advance an' give an ercount uv yourself."

Sexton, (advancing): "Most Noble Shiner, I fotch ter ye er child uv ther outer world what desires ter be drapped into ther Lower Regions fer ter larn more uv our glorious prefeshun."

Second voice: "Ar' he er worthy cander-date?"

Sexton: "Most worthy, my Noble Shiner."

Second voice: "What worthy deed has he done fer our cause?"

Sexton: "Deserted from ther New Nited States army."

Second voice: "Worthy, most worthy, Noble Guide. Ye hev my permission ter pass him on ter ther brink uv 'Satan's Leap,' whar he will be fixed an' drapped."

Sexton conducted the detective on to the edge



of the cliff. The moon threw its great yellow light over the mountain, bringing out with stupefying vividness the awful specter that was passing on the brink of Satan's Leap.

Four stout, short men, wearing black masks, advanced carrying a large coil of rope. One of them, seemingly the leader, stepped forward and laying his hand heavily on Henry's shoulder, spoke in a deep monotonous voice:

"Podner, ye ar' now standin' on ther sacred rock known ez Satan's Leap. Ye ar' about ter take ther fust degree uv ther order uv 'Dixie Shiners' an', ez er proof uv yer grit, ye ar' required ter take er journey inter ther Lower Regions; an' hit haint fer me ter say thet ye'll ever come back. But, ye hav' ther consolation uv knowin' thet all Noble Shiners already thar, hav' made this journey, an' them what's er comin' will hav' ter do hit too. Prepare fer ther worst. Pray fer ther best."

The spokesman then turned to the man with the rope and said:

"Most Noble Hangman, approach an' make fast ther 'Shiner's knot'."

The Most Noble Hangman advanced and with a sailor's dexterity applied the rope; making a



kind of hanging basket around Henry's body. When he had finished, he said :

"He's ready fer ther drap, Most Noble Shiner."

All was darkness to Henry Thogmartin during this dialogue. Not a ray of the moonlight penetrated the hoodwink; the solitary peaks, the boundless chestnut forest, the stately pines, the sparkling waters of Devil Creek, below, were all silent witnesses to this thrilling ordeal. But, Henry, with unswerving faith in Sexton, did not flinch nor complain but in humble supplication put his trust in Him that dwelleth not in the "Lower Regions," and patiently awaited the beginning of the first degree of the "Dixie Shiners."

Four men held the rope in check, while Sexton eased Henry over the brink of that great hanging rock—Satan's Leap. When the detective's weight fell upon the cable it sped out and he shot downward into the darkness, but they soon checked him and then slowly lowered him down, down, down, three hundred feet or more. Only a few coils of the long cable remained unwound when his descent was stopped, while far below in the blackness of the valley he hung, yet a hundred feet from the earth. He could hear the rippling stream; could feel the tugging of the rope; other



than this he was ignorant of his stupendous surroundings. It is well that he was, for doubtless he would have succumbed to the awfulness of the scene could he in the full realization of his peril have viewed it; however, being blind to all, he swung like a weight suspended between heaven and earth; hemmed in by two towering gray walls of limestone which reached in a semi-circle around the mountain for half a mile, in either direction, presenting a repellant aspect, bald and barren save here and there, where a rhododendron wound its hardy roots around a jagged stone and clung tenaciously to its rugged vantage ground.

This great rocky mass was perforated by numerous caverns. In front of one of these, a veritable Hall of St. Michael, Henry dangled for several minutes. At length a pistol was fired from above, then he was pulled within and taken from the basket.

The inhabitants of this hall, or cave as it really was, spoke in the same deep voice characteristic of the strange men Henry had previously met on the peak.

"Welcome, child uv ther yearth!" one of them exclaimed. "Foller, we'll lead ye inter ther Lower



Regions, whar ye'll receive instructions inter our noble gang. Advance with caution."

They conducted him onward further into the cave until they approached a gurgling subterranean stream; here they were commanded to halt by another deep voice which said:

"By what right does er child uv ther yearth seek ter cross Devil Creek, inter ther Lower Regions?"

Guide: "By ther right uv qualification, Most Noble."

M. N.: "Ar' he er criminal?"

Guide: "He ar', Most Noble."

M. N.: "Ar' he at outs with ther New Nited States Gover'ment?"

Guide: "He ar' Most Noble."

M. N.: "Ar' he in kerhoots with us?"

Guide: "Even so, Most Noble."

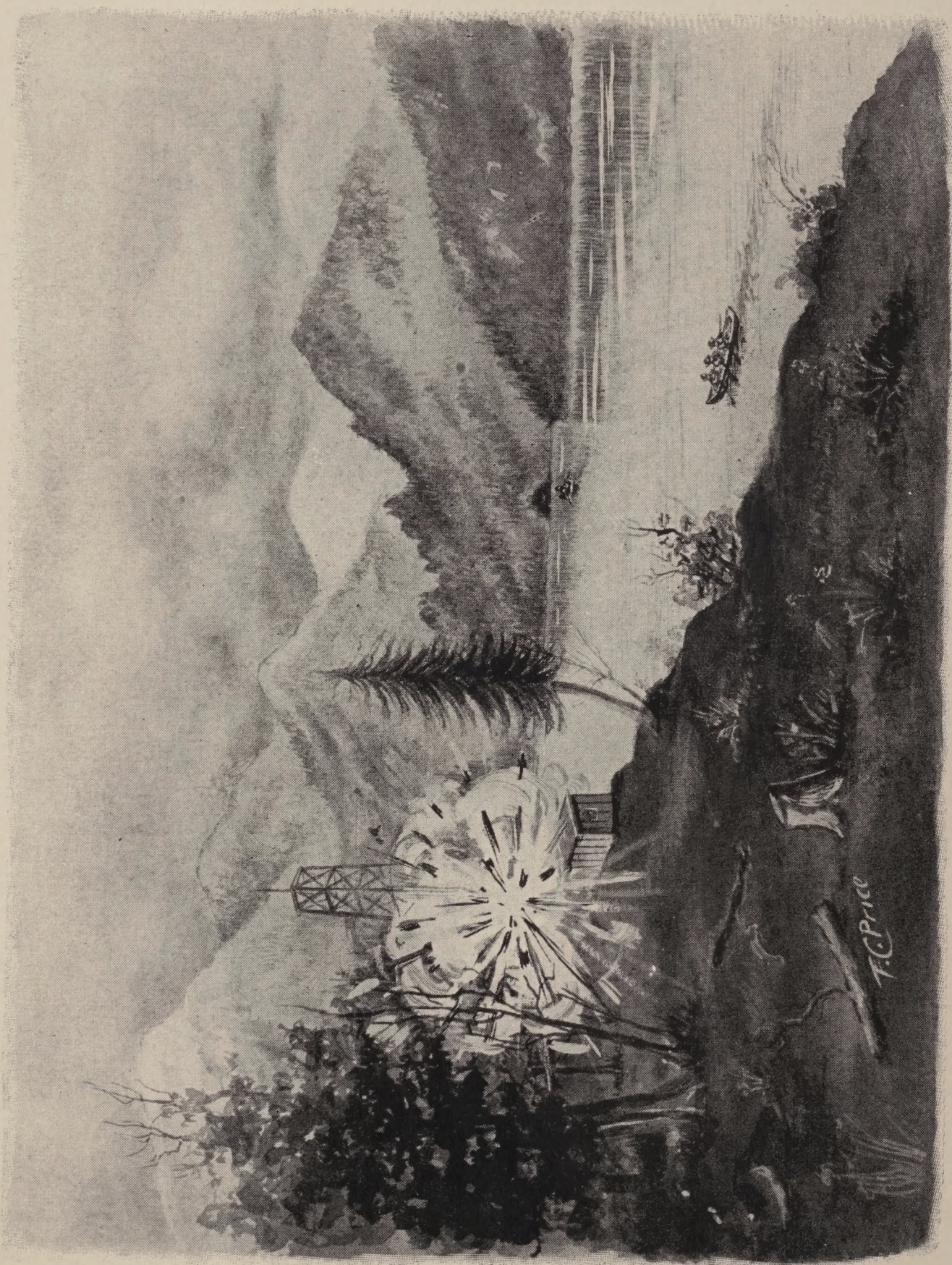
M. N.: "Then guide him across Devil Creek inter ther sacred Lower Regions, an' advance him ter ther Most Noble Dome, whar he'll hev ter kneel down an' tooken ther sublime oath uv er Most Noble Dixie Shiner."

Whereupon one of the guides said to Henry:

"Grab this hyre pole an' foller I."

In this manner the detective was led across Devil Creek, by walking on a puncheon that spanned the channel; and then conducted into a





“ A BLINDING FLASH! ”

T.C. Price







room at right angles with the main cavern, where an almost suffocating heat engulfed him. Again the voice spoke:

“Child uv ther outer yearth, ye have been safely drapped from Satan’s Leap, down ter ther entrance uv Shiner’s Abode, an’ fotched without harm over Devil Creek; now ye stand fer ther fust time in yer life on ther rocky floor uv ther Lower Regions, er place most sacred ter ther heart uv every Dixie Shiner erbove dirt er below hit. Child, ye stand fer ther fust time, surrounded by er gang uv ‘Dixie Shiners;’ er gang thet ud wade through hell er mile ter protect er true an’ worthy brother ‘Shiner;’ a gang thet ud foller ye ter ther jumpin off place, an’ pump hot lead inter yer carcass till ye smoked like er tar kiln should ye be sich er d—— fool ez ter violate ther oath now erbout ter be imposed on ye by this hyre gang. Child uv ther yearth, there is yit time ter back out ef ye haint got grit er nuf ter die fer ther gang er any member there uv. Answer erloud right now, so ther whole gang kin hear ye; ar’ ye willin’ ter take this oath? Beware, child, an’ remember one crooked move outin ye, arter ye hev taken this hyre oath means death ter ye. Will ye take ther oath? Say ‘yes,’ er ‘no’.”

A painful silence followed. Henry could hear the gang breathing; could hear the simmering of



the boiling liquor; and could hear his own heart jumping like a rat in a trap. In the few brief moments that passed his thoughts ran over the events of his whole life. When he remembered his escape from the Buzzard Roost gang he realized that his danger was far less here with this gang of moonshiners than any where else just then.

"All is fair in love or war. This is a bitter pill, but, I'd rather take this oath internally than an ounce of lead externally," he mused. So, by a violent effort of stammering he managed to squeak out a husky "yes."

Immediately thereupon he was caused to kneel and place his hands upon the body of a moonshine still, which was almost hot enough to blister them. In this position, he was made to take the moonshiner's binding obligation. When all was in readiness the Most Noble Shiner said:

"Child, speak yer own name an' say after I" (Henry repeated the following):

"I, Henry Thogmartin, uv my own doin' an' likin' in ther sight uv this gang, an' with my hands on this bilin' still, do hyre by, an' hyre on swar by all thet's good an' bad, thet I'll not tell nuthin' I already know er bout this hyre gang ur may find out frum now on ter any body in ther world ur outin hit, unlessen hit be ter er Most



Noble Shiner, ur in er full fledged gang uv sich; an' ter him ur them, nuther, unlessen I know they're dyed in ther wool. On top uv all this hyre I swar thet I won't lie on, nur steal frum none uv this hyre gang, nur ter stand by an' let hit be done, ez long ez cateriges er ez cheap ez they ar' now. On top uv all this I sw'ar that I'll lie, sw'ar lies, steal, cut, maul, ur shoot fer this hyre gang, ur any member ther' uv. Moreover do I sw'ar thet I'll warn this hyre gang ur any member ther' uv, uv ther wharbouts uv eny revinue man, marshal, er spotter, er spyer, thet I may know uv, an' do all in my power ter rid ther kintry uv sich trash, even ter ther committin' uv bush-whackin! Moreover I do sw'ar, thet I won't give er way none uv ther formulas er secrets belongin' ter ther makin' uv moonshine whiskey; nur eny uv ther private secrets thet might be told ter I by eny one uv this hyre gang. Moreover, I do sw'ar thet I'll stick ter this hyre gang, their women an' kids, through thick an' thin, fer alus an' evermore. Moreover, do I sw'ar thet if this gang thinks uv enything else thet they want me ter sw'ar ter, I'll do hit, in ther Court House, not excepted. Ter ther whole uv this, what I hev gone over, do I sw'ar pint blank and pintedly, without er bobble, ter keep an' ter do, tyin' myself with no littler liability then ter hev er



rope put round my neck, an' tother end tied ter a stump on top uv Satan's Leap, an' me plunged over ther precipice an' my head jerked off by ther fall; my body ter be eat up by ther wildcats an' varmints what den in Devil Creek cliffs, an' my head ter be biled fleshless, in er moonshine still, an' ther skull kept fer an example ter them thet follers me; wuz I ever ter go back on this, my most noble oath uv er Dixie Shiner, so help I, my brothers, ter do ez I hev said, so help me Jeff Davis."

After Henry had completed the oath the Most Noble Shiner addressed him as follows:

"My brother, ye ar' now goin' ter see fer ther fust time in yer life er moonshine still in full blast, an' er purtier sight ye never gazed at; yet, while kneelin' hyre surrounded by this gang, yer hands on ther noble Dome, don't yer feel a little shaky lessen yer don't git back ter yer pap in ez good order ez ye left home? May ye ever keep these ides fresh in yer mind, an' forever scorn ther New Nited States Gover'ment. Now, my brother, ther Lord made ther world an' trimmed her in er week, an' when he got done, he war uv the same notion erbout certain things ez ye ar' at this minit: He wanted ter see what He'd done, so He says, 'Light,' an' thar wuz light."

At the same instant one of the gang jerked the



blind-fold from Henry's eyes, and a number of torches and gas lights flashed up all around him.

When the bandage fell he staggered to his feet blinded by the lights, and it was with considerable effort that the guide kept him from falling. The glare that met his eyes, which for hours had been in darkness, was so severe that temporary blindness ensued; and for a time he stood dazed; unable to discern anything about him. Some one pressed a cup of liquor to his lips and said:

"Take er snort uv this, podner, hit'll cut ther cob webs outin yer guzzle an' make ye snap yer eyes like er tarripin."

Henry took a swallow from the cup, and, indeed, it did "cut ther cob webs outin his guzzle," and made his eyes snap "like er tarripin," for the strong whiskey strangled him and a fit of coughing brought the liquor spattering from his nostrils and mouth, and the tears streaming from his eyes.

His inability to swig, with impunity, the newly made "moonshine" whiskey proved great amusement for the "gang," and the cavern walls reverberated with the basso "Haw, Haw" of the Dixie Shiners.

This incident, however, embarrassing to Henry, was not without its benefit, for with magical celerity, his eyes resumed their office, and from



out the dazzling light appeared the forms of a score or more of men, roughly featured; their hair illkept and shaggy; their faces bushed with grizzly beard. Some had eyes, deep set and pig-gish, others were blear-eyed, and yet others were marked with the eyes of an owl. Their build was diverse. Some of figures stout and short; some tall, and stooped, and sallow, having the consumptive's posture. Each man wore pantaloons and blouse of homespun jeans, and around his waist a well-filled cartridge belt was buckled, to which swung a holster supporting a large Colt's revolver; while under his hands, with stock resting on the floor, stood the mountaineer's favorite firearm, a Winchester rifle.

Directly in front of Henry was the first of a long row of copper stills, which steamed and simmered and created a kind of engine house din, that gave the cavern more the aspect of a large boiler room than a distillery. These stills in capacity were not less than fifty gallons each, and a number of them were in full operation.

In addition to the men who had conducted the initiation, there were some half dozen others busily hurrying here and there, performing the sundry duties imposed by such a colossal plant.

Henry eagerly scanned the crowd, hoping to see some familiar face, but all were strange to



him. He wondered why Sexton was not there, but remembering the strained state of affairs at home he knew that the old man had hastened back after placing him in care of the men on Satan's Leap.

The most noticeable of all Henry's queer associates, was that worthy person bearing the high sounding title of "Most Noble." He was a large man with big bulged eyes and an extremely long moustache which he tied at the back of his neck. He sat tailor fashion upon the head of a whiskey barrel, and surveyed his surroundings with an air of authority. This worthy individual at length tapped the barrel with his revolver, and when order was restored, said:

"Behold, brethren, brother Henry Thogmartin, er full fledged Dixie Shiner. Advance an' greet him with ther grip an' worc' uv our glorious institution."

The gang relaxed into an easier posture and with general hilarity crowded about Henry, all anxiously waiting to give him the official grip and pass-word. The former consisting substantially of strongly grasping the hand as near to the base of the thumb as possible and then with a quick motion bringing the hand upward, similar to taking aim with a revolver. The latter being: "Howd'y Jeff Davis."



Notwithstanding the tense formality of the procedure, heretofore, this phase was not carried out so strictly. Some members deviating so far as to use the following ridiculous salutations:

"Hello, Jeff Davis."

"Give me er shake uv yer paw, Jeff Davis."

"Wuz ye scared much, Jeff Davis?"

"Glad ter see ye ez if I'd run er rusty nail through my foot, Jeff Davis."

This welcome reception was concluded by the Most Noble again rapping on the barrel, then turning to a man at his right who held a torch in his hand, he said:

"Brother Torch Toter, conduct ther gang inter ther feast-chamber, whar we'll eat, drink an' be merry fer ter-morrer ther deputy-marshals mout come."

Whereupon the Devil Creek Gang of Dixie Shiners filed out, and assembled in another part of the cave, around a roughly hewn table, which creaked under its load of coarse food, and ardent beverages. The menu, while not as delicious as would be served by the elite of our land, was with no less relish devoured; for each man in his own peculiar way, devoid of every shadow of table etiquette, ate with greed and kept the bowls of "still beer" turning with right good cheer.

Henry, who had been under the strain of excite-



ment for the last thirty-six hours, could not be expected to partake of a mouthful of the food or beverages, however, he quaffed the beer with much delight and ate the baked possum and sweet potatoes with an appetite that was not lost on his hearty comrades, for there is nothing that finds its way into the affections of the generous hearted mountaineer, like a good appetite at his board.

At last the climax came. The table, by the litter of bones, resembled a wild cat's den; the still beer had performed its mission lulling many of the gang into a drunken stupor, and inciting others to song and dance. Tobacco smoke dense enough to be carved with a knife floated in clouds through the feast chamber, and Shiners' Abode echoed with the maniacal yells of many fire-eating Shiners, who in wrathful language cursed the government and discharged their fire arms to no purpose; unless to the discontent of the reptiles that always lurked about the walls of the cavern.

Despite their grewsome initiation, their awful ironclad oath, their blood curdling penalty, despite all this, the Shiners' banquet was in one respect like Belshazzar's feast: The hand was writing on the wall. Like Daniel, Henry could have divined its writing but they knew it not.

The walls of this great underground hall were filled with sub-caverns, which the Shiners used



for sleeping bunks. To one of these Henry was directed and with no little surprise found exactly as he had left them on the peak, his gun and pair of linsey blankets. His berth was little narrower than an ordinary bed, and slightly concaved in the bottom, making a very substantial, if not comfortable, resting place. Without undressing he rolled himself in his blankets, "Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams," but there were no dreams of pleasure for Henry that night.

If a strange bed although downy with soft feathers and invitingly spread with white linens and sweet covers, within the comfortable walls of some home-like hotel is fraught with an influence of unrestfulness, what could be said of Henry's position that night; as he lay there in the cradle of nature, wrapped like a mummy that has been shelved away to be undisturbed until the dawn of eternity; while across the cavern, along the opposite wall, crept an army of fire-eyed reptiles that flashed a volley of angry sparks at him and made his flesh crawl.

The sensation of horror that engulfed him could no more be described than the feelings of one who is chained in a dungeon and left to be slowly tortured to death by devouring vermin. But, for the wretched there is one unfailing solace



like oil on a troubled sea; one sentinel that withstands the wild eyed fiend that seeks to enter our chariot of reason and drive it head long into the raging maelstrom of insanity—that is Retrospection; and within its comforting dominion Henry permitted his mind to wander, nor did it have far to go, either, for only two short days before he had walked innocently along the dull old road brushing the dust from the leaves that swept his coat; while, in fancy he dwelt upon a picture of home. Then came the wire, the fall, the dreary march to Buzzard Roost cliffs, the long lonely night, made more unbearable by the storm and his galling fetters; then the thrilling rescue, and last, the heavenly journey through the woods with *her*, whose every look was an inspiration, whose every step was the rustle of an angel's wing.

Here Imagination's fascinating wand lured him into the dreamy wilderness of the Future where a myriad of fitful fancies flitted before his tired mind.



## CHAPTER X.

“RATTLESNAKE AN’ BUST HEAD.”



UT on the face of Shiners Peak the scorching sun shriveled the leaves on a red-oak bush. An ivory billed woodpecker drummed on a dead pine snag. A rusty lizard lay panting and blinking its little red eyes on the face of Satan's Leap; but, these lethargical signs were no criterion of the interior; for hundreds of feet below in the bowels of the mountain swarmed a busy hive of human bees and among them locked in the restoring arms of Slumber lay Henry Thogmartin, undisturbed by the busy hum of talking Shiners; the sputter of the boiling still; or the loathsome jingle of the angry rattlesnakes, and on he slept until Sexton came and woke him.

His first words were to inquire of Lady, and when Sexton told him she was much improved, he was happy.



Aunt Mandy Sexton had sent him a delicious breakfast, which he must eat before they went to work.

"Wa'al, would ye like ter explore this cave er fore ye take yer job?" Sexton asked when Henry had finished breakfast.

"Might as well, I reckon," replied Henry carelessly.

"Come on then."

And by the aid of an engineer's torch, the old man, with childish confidence, guided the detective through his vast illicit distillery, showing him every thing and explaining every detail. Far into the cave they went, along the side of the subterranean stream where a large cavern was stocked two tiers deep with empty whiskey barrels.

"Where do you get these barrels?" Henry asked.

"They come frum Cincinnati, ter Medley's store fer kraut an' sich."

"How do you get them in here?"

"Float 'em down Devil Creek, what runs clean through ther mountain an' out on 'tother side."

"And when they are full do you float them out?"

"Yes."

"Very handy arrangement, isn't it?"



"Wa'al I'd tell er man yes."

"How many barrels can you make a day?"

"Ten, if we hev eny kind uv luck er tall. We jist started up in yearnest last night, an' haint under headway yit."

Sexton then turned to a corner of the cavern which was partitioned off and said:

"Here's whar we keep our apples fer makin' brandy."

"How many have you in there now?" asked Henry.

"Oh, erbout two hundred bushel, I reckon."

"I should think they would rot before you could use them," remarked Henry.

"Wa'al, they mout, then agin they mouten't, but 'taint no difference nohow," Sexton went on, "cause rotten apples make er bout ez good brandy ez eny; they hev ter rot anyhow ye know."

"No, I didn't know that."

"Hits er fact jist ther same."

"What do you do when the apple crop fails?"

"Oh, thet hardly ever happens, but sometimes ther crop is so skant thet we hev ter fall back on taters an' pawpaws, an' persimmons fer fillin' in, sorter."

"How about the corn-whiskey, I see no corn?"

"No, we don't fetch corn in hyre; we jist take ther corn ter Medley's grist mill up yander whar



Devil Creek forks, an' hev hit ground an' put in barrels an' float hit down, too."

"Who is Medley?"

"Oh, he's Crit's daddy; one of ther gang."

"How do you dispose of such immense quantities of liquor, Mr. Sexton?"

"W'y thets easy: When we git erbout twenty barrels er head, some dark night we drap 'em inter Devil Creek, an' drive 'em like saw logs down ter Levica Fork, whar we load 'em in er junk boat, an' then down ther river they go."

"How far?"

"Ter Cincinnati."

"It looks like that would be rather risky business, especially when you tried to sell it."

"Not er bit, W'y thar's one man thar whats handled all my stuff fer twenty years, an' never been 'spicioned yit."

Henry would have asked who this man was, but he feared it might arouse Sexton's suspicions, so he concluded to bide his time. As they walked on toward another department, Henry said:

"I notice no smoke in the cave anywhere, what becomes of it?"

"Wait till we git inter ther still-room an' I'll show ye."

They went from one cell to another which was unused. It seemed to Henry as if the entire



mountain was honey-combed with caverns. And as a whole, the place was most admirably adapted for the purpose it was serving—an illicit distillery.

The main cave was from fifty to one hundred feet wide, and from fifteen to twenty feet high, with four vast chambers; the still-room, the feast chamber, the sleeping-room and the stock-room. Many Indian relics, skulls and other bones, two birch bark canoes, and a heap of Indian arrow heads, were among the signs of pre-historic occupancy.

The fauna of Shiners' Abode consisted principally of rats, rattlesnakes, bats that hung in clusters about the roof, and, perhaps the most noteworthy of all, the over grown monobranchus (which were called blind water dogs by the Shiners).

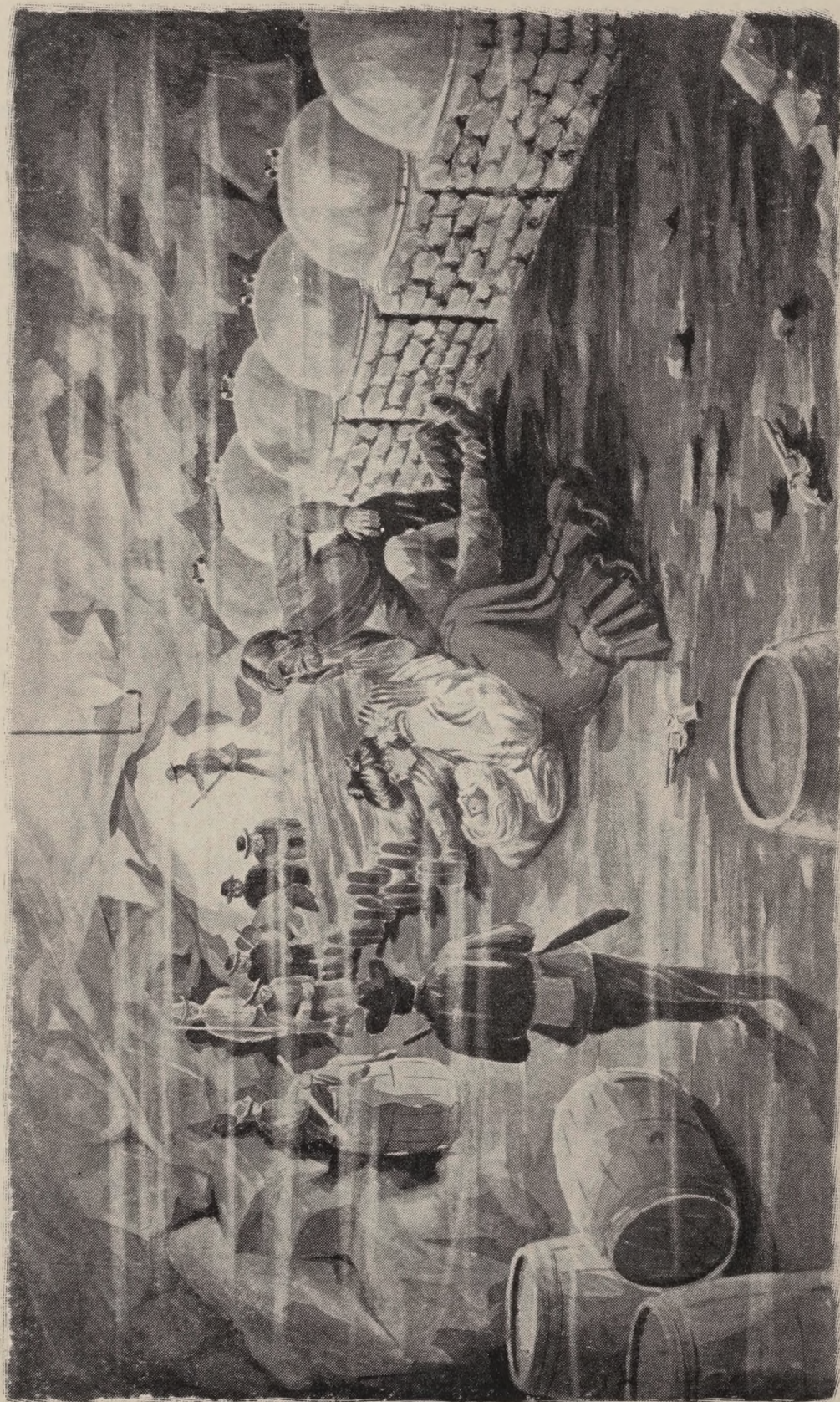
This species of monobranchus average three feet in length, weigh about twelve pounds and can be heard, day or night, floundering in the water along the edge of Devil Creek.

Sexton remarked to Henry when they had returned to the still-room:

"Come round hyre an' I'll show ye whar ther smoke goes ter."

Henry crossed to where the old man stood behind the row of stills and discovered under every





“TWO LONG ARMS RAISED ABOVE THE GIRL,”—







still, blazing as serenely as if in some kitchen range, a large rose-shaped gas burner.

"Gas! In the name of all that's wonderful, how did you strike gas in this cave?" Henry exclaimed in surprise.

"Wa'al I didn't strike hit er tall. Hit struck me: Er long time er go I wuz in hyre hidin' frum ther 'Revenues;' thet wuz long er fore I begin 'stillin' in hyre, an' I went in this very room an' I laid down, an' ther fust thing I knowd I didn't hardly know nothin', jist kinder crazy, like er addled duck, ye know. Wa'al, finally I pulled myself tergether an' started fer ther open air; but, I smelled somethin' powerful strong, an' I started ter 'vestigate, an' bless yer soul, honey, I discivered thet gas jist er ceapin' right up outin thet crack in ther rock floor. I tetched er match ter hit, an' hit blazed up pert ez er cricket, an' bout ez high ez my head. I couldn't put hit out ter save my life, so I jist santered off an' let her blaze. Wa'al, 'twarant long arter that till yan little Irishman (Sexton pointed toward a small man who was working about one of the stills) come er long by my house an' wanted ter stay all night. I took 'im in an' during ther conversation what follered I found out he wuz what they call er gas fitter. Wa'al he gits drunk one night, an' ups an' tells me ez ter how he had killed er man



over in North Carolina, an' would like ter stay with me fer er spell. So, I seed I had 'im foul; an' when he sobered up I fotched 'im hyre an' axed 'im: could he rig thet blaze up fer use under er still? An', says he, 'bet yer life I kin.' An' says I, 'do hit then.' So we jist cut loose an' done hit, an' hev been improvin' on hit ever since, till we hev got ther most upter datest moonshine still south uv Mason's and Dixon's line."

"Well, that beats my time; old man, you are a trump," said Henry slapping him on the back goodnaturedly. "How do you make corn whiskey, anyhow?" continued the detective.

"Thet's jist what I's goin' ter show ye. Do ye see yan tubs?" went on Sexton pointing his finger toward the tubs.

"Yes."

"Them's mash tubs. Wa'al, fust an' foremost, ye put some shelled corn ur barley inter er tub uv warm water an' let hit sprout; then, ye take an' let hit dry; hits malt then. Next, ye grind ther malt on er old hand-mill, an' put er little uv hit, an' er right smart uv corn meal in er tub, an' pore water over hit all; an' let hit rack off (ferment) then when hits dead (through fermenting) we put hit in ther body uv ther still an' boil hit; an' ther steam goes through thet worm thar in ther cold water, an' condinses, an' comes out liquor,



—Kaintucky Moonshine Whiskey, ef ye please."

"I noticed some of the boys put a bunch of laurel leaves in the still cap a while ago, what was that done for?" asked Henry.

"Ever hearn uv '*rattlesnak*' an' '*bust-head*' liquor?" Sexton asked.

"Yes."

"Wa'al thet's how hits made. Laurel is pizen, an' when ye wants ter make fightin' whiskey, fill ther cap with laurel tops. W'y, er pint uv hit would make Talmage throw rocks at er funeral procession."

Sexton then showed Henry how to grind malt; an old hand-mill being used for this purpose. Whereupon Henry took up his initial duty as a Shiner. Sexton then turned his attention to other affairs of the still.



## CHAPTER XI.

### IN THE TRAP.



NEAR noon, the day Lady Sexton rescued Henry from the Buzzard Roost gang, Critendon Medley was closeted in the back room of his father's store, in conversation with Jim Bob Sievers, the leader of the gang:

"Well, did you get 'im?" Medley asked, showing his anxiety in every feature.

"Yes," answered Jim Bob doggedly.

"That's luck, where is he?"

"Gone ter h—, I reckon," said Jim Bob.

"What do you mean?" The man hesitated.

"Speak man!" exclaimed Medley, jumping up and looking at Jim Bob angrily.

"He got er way. I don't know exactly how. All four wuz guardin' him till day light, then Tom Brown an' me left him tied hard an' fast thar in Buzzard Roost, with Bill Henry Sizemore an' Joe Toad Carpenter ter guard 'im; an' we lit out



ter tell ye; but, 'fore we got far bang went er gun. Me an' Tom run back an' thar wuz Bill Henry wabblin' round like er fittified purp, an' yellin' thet he wuz shot dead. Ther priznur wuz gone. Down in ther forks uv er black oak tree, under ther cliff, sot Joe Toad, squakin' like er rain crow."

"How on earth did it all happen?" asked Medley more perplexed than ever.

"All I know erbout hit is what Bill Henry an' Joe Toad told me, an' thet haint much. Joe Toad said he hearn somethin' tearin' ther bushes, out side ther cave, an' went out ter see what hit wuz; an' ther fust thing he knowd er hell-hound chased him over ther cliff. An' Bill Henry said he run out ter see what wuz ther row, an' er hell-hound chased 'im back inter ther cave an' ther priznur up an' shot 'im dead, an' when he come to, ther deserter wuz done gone, dorg an' all."

"If Bill Henry was shot dead, how could he come to?" inquired Medley.

"Oh, he wuz jist stunted fer er while. Ther bullet grazed his temple barely drawin' blood."

The explanation of Bill Henry's statement is a simple one: When he rushed back into the cave he could only discern the form of a person, and not knowing that Lady was there, naturally supposed that it was Henry who had shot him.



"Well," said Medley, "that's some of Tobe Sexton's work, and the best thing for you and the boys to do is to go over in West Virginia and stay till I send you word to come back."

Jim Bob stood munching the end of his mustache and gazing blankly at the floor, then looking up at Medley, said:

"We haint scared uv Sexton nur none uv his gang."

"Oh, I know that," pursued Medley, "but we don't want to raise any disturbance. The easiest way is the best way. If Sexton gets started there's liable to be a funeral or two 'round here before long. The thing to do is to lay low and watch our chance. If anything turns up I'll let you know."

Medley handed Jim Bob a bill and continued: "Here's ten dollars, that'll pay you very well for your last night's work; but, I'd a d—— sight rather paid you fifty and got the man. Of course I don't blame you for letting him get away; I don't see how it could have been avoided, however, it is a dang strange thing to me how it happened."

"To me, too," replied Jim Bob, "howsomever, I'll do as ye say. If ye need us, ye will find us up on Tug at ther hang-out."

Without further remarks the conversation was



concluded. Jim Bob returned to his companions who were waiting for him in the nearby bushes.

Medley resumed his seat and gave himself over to meditation. He was sorely disappointed by Henry Thogmartin's escape; but, no good could come of grieving over spilled milk, he thought, and his next move would be to discover Henry's whereabouts and set another trap for him.

"There's only two ways for the cat to hop," mused Medley, "he'll either leave this country or go to work in Sexton's still. If he leaves, all good and well; if he goes to work in the still, he is my mutton. I'll take a stroll over to Sexton's one of these days and see how the land lays there. Tomorrow night Mace Adkins will come up to the store for rations for Sexton's gang of moonshiners, and I can find out from him if Thogmartin is down at the still. If he is, his cake is dough. I will start the rumor among the Shiners that he is a government spy, and I can see his finish now."

Thus jealousy, that evil eyed monster that lurks in every human heart as mild as a zephyr when passive; as violent as a tornado when aroused, led Medley on in his fiendish persecution of the young detective.

He had no idea that Henry was, in reality, a Secret Service man, but he knew the nature of the



Shiners so well that he could with a certainty figure on results, could he inculcate in their suspicious minds the belief that Henry was a spy. If he could accomplish this, he knew that his rival would never again interfere with him or any one else. There was but one precaution necessary: He must keep Sexton in total darkness of his scheme, for, Medley was well aware that, should the old man hear the rumor, he would trace it to the very tap-root; and, of course, that must not happen.



## CHAPTER XII.

### MEDLEY VISITS THE SEXTONS.



THE following afternoon, Aunt Mandy Sexton sat by Lady's bedside swaying leisurely a bush of peacock feathers, while the azure smoke from her old clay pipe drifted to the open window, and wound itself among the matted leaves of a morning-glory vine. Back of her was the old fireplace. Above, on the fire-board, lazily ticking the dull summer hours away, sat the venerable Seth Thomas clock, its restless pendulum flashing a bundle of sunlight back and forth across the floor. Old Dum, the dog that never barked, lay in the front door taking his afternoon nap.

The yard gate creaked; a guinea hen's epical pot-rack sounded the alarm. Old Dum arose to his feet, his massive form half filling the door. A low thunder-like rumble issued from his mouth. Critendon Medley gracefully strode up the gravel walk toward the house, plucked a rose-bud and



fastened it in button-hole of his coat as he came along.

The girl was sleeping, and Aunt Mandy was glad of it, for she knew Medley's presence would annoy her. The old woman pushed by the snarling dog and went to meet the young man.

"Howd'y, Aunt Mandy," he said as she approached.

"Only middlin', Crit, how's all with ye?" said the old woman rubbing her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Where's Lady?"

"In bed sick." Aunt Mandy knew what the next question would be and was ready for it. She had an idea that he was spying, and to use her own expression, "She layed as to how he would tote his ignorance home with him."

"What ails her?" Medley inquired, rubbing his hands.

"Typhoid fever," said the old woman with a sigh, continuing, "ther pore child's er sleep now fer ther fust time since she took down, an' can't be disturbed."

"I'm very sorry to hear it, is there anything I can do for her comfort?"

"Not thet I know uv."

"Where's Tobe?" asked Medley.

"He's er way on business."



Medley had planned to pump the old woman, so he lead out:

"I overheard two of the Buzzard Roost gang doing some strange talking in the store yesterday, and I thought perhaps Tobe would like to hear about it."

He waited to see what effect his speech would have. The old woman rubbed her nose with her gingham apron, and looked across the field. Medley went on:

"They were saying something about Thogmartin, whom they had under arrest, shooting one of them and escaping, and—"

"Did he kill ther man?" interrupted Aunt Mandy, innocently.

"No," answered Medley, "the bullet only grazed his head, dazing him. Another one of the gang got scared and jumped over the cliff into a tree top."

"I wonder!" exclaimed the old woman with feigned surprise.

Medley ventured to ask another question:

"Where is Thogmartin?"

Aunt Mandy was anxious to tell him.

"Skipped ther kintry, I lay," she replied.

"Well, I'm in hopes he has." This time Medley spoke the truth.



“Did the man what jumped over ther cliff hurt himself?” asked the old woman.

“No, only broke a rib or so.”

“Well, fer ther luve uv heaven!” she exclaimed. “Well, Crit, I must be gittin back, ur ther fetch-taked flies’ll hev Lady bodaciously eat up ef I don’t.”

The old woman turned and went into the house. Medley rubbed his hands in a troubled way; looked up the road as if expecting to see some one, then walked off toward the gate, whistling dolefully.

Shortly afterwards Sexton returned from the still.

“Crit Medley wuz hyre lookin’ fer ye, so he said; but I think he wuz spyin’ eround;” remarked the old woman to her brother.

“I seed ’im,” said Sexton.

“Did he tell ye what he heard?”

“Yes,” replied the old man, “an’ good news hit wuz too. I actually b’lieve Lady would hev gone stark mad in ernother week, ef thet man had er been killed dead.”

“Oh, I lay she would,” said Aunt Mandy, “fer she’s been ravin’ powerful ez hit is. She’s no mor’n er wake till she’s off an’ gone agin, cryin’ an’ moanin’ an’ sayin’ ‘Thar comes thet man! Stop him! Stop him! My God, he’ll kill me!



Ther gun! Give me ther gun! O, God! O, God! I've killed 'im! See 'im fallin'!' Then she'll throw her hands up an' holler, 'Take 'im away! Take 'im away he is dead! Oh, I can't stand hit, take 'im out uv my sight!' That's how she raves an' goes on every time she comes to herself. Hit haint nothin' but ther medicine what's holdin' her down now."

"I know hit, Mandy, an' I'll set by her bed ter night an' when she wakes up I'll tell her ez ter how ther man she shot aint dead, nur even hurt, nur ther tother one nuther, ther one what ole Dum flung over ther cliff."

"Wa'al hit'll be er pow'rful load offen ther pore girl's mind, I lay."

Late that night, Sexton sat by his daughter's bedside, gently stroking her hair. The house bore the stillness of death. The old clock's dreary tick deepened the lonesomeness. Over field and woodland hung a melancholy silence, only broken by the song of the whipporwill:

"As he sadly sang to his own little love,  
In the tree that bends over the rill."

It was then that Lady Sexton's great brown eyes opened and gazed sadly about, trembling in their sockets, as flickering reason faltered on the threshold of consciousness. Truly "the windows of the soul" are the eyes.



Sexton broke the heavenly news to the girl with the gentleness of a mother. A sweet, sad smile blessed the old man, as he stooped and kissed her, and in prayerful accents she murmured:

"Thank God, Thank God," and still holding his hand, she closed her eyes and slept. It was the sleep that restored, that "knits up the raveled sleeve of care."

While this pathetic scene was going on another, of a different nature, was transpiring in the back room of Medley's store. Crit Medley was pouring into the foul brain of Mace Adkins the venomous vapor of a guilt-steeped soul. Adkins in Medley's hand was a tool. More than once they had with malice aforethought inhabited the laurel thicket that hedges the old mountain road; more than once the simultaneous bark of their Winchester's had sent some Revenue man to his reward.

Adkins had just finished telling Medley that Henry was at the still, when Medley said:

"Mace, it's my opinion that Thogmartin is a government spy. If the gang lets him get out of their clutches I wouldn't give thirty cents for their chance. The first thing you know some dark night a squad of United States Deputy-Marshals will swoop down on Shiners' Abode, and the gang's post office address for the next two years



will be Covington, Kentucky. The best thing you can do is to put them on to his game. In the meantime, I'll do a little investigating."

"W'y h— fire, Crit, uv course I'll tell 'em!" said Adkins, turning pale as death, and starting to go.

"Come back a minute, Mace," Crit called. Adkins returned, and in a cautious manner Medley said:

"Mace, explain to the gang, that Thogmartin has got the wool pulled over Sexton's eyes; tell them that the old man is childish and not long for this world, and to just say nothing and saw wood, and when I get all the evidence necessary, I'll come down some night, and we'll give this smart young gentleman a hearing. Say to them Mace, that it's all in the family anyhow, as I am going to be Sexton's son-in-law before long, and will look after things for him—kind of manager, you know. Tell them not to let Sexton know that they think Thogmartin is a spy, for it would only trouble the poor old fellow, he's so wrapt up in the young scoundrel.

"Don't worry, Crit, I'll fix thet all right," said Adkins as he went out.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### A MOONSHINER'S ADVICE.



SUMMER merged into autumn. The first white frost had ripened the fox-grapes and persimmons; and the old dirt road lay buried under a carpet of crimson and gold. Bevvies of red-breasted robins plucked the berries from the sumac, clusters of golden pawpaws dropped from their boughs into the waters of Devil Creek. Henry Thogmartin had never once seen the light of day since his entrance to Shiners' Abode. His life of eternal night had worn away with the slowness of a dirge. His once susceptible impulses were now calloused and sordid. No more did the ominous rattle of the snakes or the flashing glance of the fire-eyed reptiles disturb his slumbers. He ate the coarse food and lived the coarse life of a Shiner. The Shiners were to him like brothers—Joseph's brothers. Their secrets were his. He was familiar with the workings of the



still as a baker with his oven, and the great cavern was his home.

His mission, so far as the illicit distilling was concerned, was performed,—to press the button only remained undone. A little while and all would be over, and this great success would give him fame and prestige, but yet he was dissatisfied, for not a word had he ever heard of his father's mysterious death. Yet there was one thing else that troubled Henry most of all. He had been sent there to uproot this great band of law breakers, and now he held in the hollow of his hand, as it were, every vantage of evidence necessary to annihilate them. Still, he faltered. Many a dark struggle he fought on the battle-field of duty. It was hard for him to make up his mind to cast the die that would surely bring destruction to Sexton, who despite his rough uncouthness, had won Henry's lasting friendship by his kindness and protection, and ties had been formed that could not be easily broken. Henry felt like the headsman, who stands with ax uplifted, yet hesitates to strike. "How can I ever strike the blow that will bring destruction to the Sexton home; that will break the brave true heart of the girl who saved my life?" he asked himself again and again.

It was the same old battle that has been fought



thousands of times, and will be fought thousands of times again—the battle “twixt Love and Duty.” “To be or not to be; that is the question: whether it is nobler in the mind,” to pluck this mountain flower and forever be a shiner, “or to take arms against a sea of trouble,” and by reporting the gang, “end them?” That was the perplexing problem that harassed his waking hours and filled his nights with troubled dreams. Lady Sexton had risked her life for him. Should he in return betray her father, and bring disgrace on her innocent head? It would be like tearing out his own heart and casting it to the denizens of Devil Creek. At one instant he could see his way clearly out of the quagmire, but the next would find him following some fitful fire-fly deeper and deeper into the bog; and thus, for three long months this mental battle raged, and might have gone on much longer had not events unaided begun to shape themselves.

Late one night in November, Sexton and Henry drifted down the murky current of Devil Creek; in advance of them slowly floated thirty barrels of new corn whiskey, that were soon to be loaded into the old junk boat, which lay anchored at the ingress of the subterranean channel.

It was almost day-break before the last barrel disappeared within the grimy walls of the old





“HE THREW UP HIS ARMS PLEADINGLY, AND FELL TO HIS KNEES” —







boat, where it, together with the other twenty-nine would soon lay hidden beneath a heap of feathers, rags, ginseng, and such other goods as belong to a trade boat's jumbled stock.

When the work was done Sexton turned to Henry and said:

"Boy, drag ther canoe up yander in ther alders, an' we'll meander over ter ther house an' see ther folks; they'll be most powerful glad ter see ye agin."

Henry quickly concealed the boat and returned. The old man's words were simple ones; but they were to Henry as a pardon is to the condemned wretch who stands on the scaffold with black cap drawn, waiting with abated breath for the trap to fall.

Sexton strode along a winding path that led around the rugged peak, Henry followed closely behind him. It was a long tiresome journey. Many times they would stop and rest.

Behind them at the foot of the mountain, rocking in the morning breeze, lay the old junk boat; the only sign of human habitation as far as their wandering eyes could see, while like a dazzling silver crescent Levica Fork coiled about the foothills, pursuing its snake-like journey downward to the North.

At last they reached the summit of Shiner's



peak, higher by half than any of the mighty herd of monstrous mountains which lay reposing in the glorious sunlight of autumn and reaching on to the South till their great backs met the azure blue of the descending sky.

As Sexton and Henry sat resting on this lordly eminence the old man surveyed with uplifted staff their surroundings—grand, majestic, sublime. Off to the East, a boundless forest loomed solemnly; like rolling waves on a golden sea, the monarchs of the woods swayed their noble heads, an unbroken wilderness of giant trees, untouched by the woodman's ax, unseen by the greedy eye of commerce.

To the South, yawning chasms stood sentinel over a glittering wall of cannel coal, stripped of soil and verdure by some dashing mountain torrent that furrowed with many a gulch the carboniferous spurs and peaks. Deep, romantic chasms, dark-hearted and sullen, slept at their feet untouched by the caressing rays of the morning sun, while all else of nature was aroused and exulting in its glorious radiance.

The old man's eyes twinkled with delight as he in contemplation, scanned the primitive charms within the compass of his sight. Gentle zephyrs softly wrapped him in "a wilderness of sweets," and the inhaled air gave him a voluptuous glow



of health and vigor that seemed to entrance his intoxicated senses. He arose and with his staff pointed round about him, and in slow and solemn accents said to the young man:

"Hits all mine. Hits all mine, ez fer ez yer eyes kin see. Ther countless trees; ther hills uv cannell coal; ther gas thet burns under ther stills, an' all ther bottom land, an' flat land, an' hill land, an' mountain land ez fer ez yer eyes kin see—hits all mine.

"Er few years more an' Sexton'll go ter his long home, ez Job says, an' be er has bin; then all this great heap uv world's goods will fall ter my leetle daughter—Lady Sexton—an' hit makes my ole heart ache ter think uv leavin' her alone, without er pertecter; ter leave her an innercent victim ter ther designin' scoundrels an' villuns thet roam this hyre world callin' themselves '*men.*'"

The old man turned and with an imploring look spoke his thoughts in the soul's saddest language—tears. After a little while he composed himself and went on:

"Boy," he began, "next ter her in Sexton's heart comes ye. There's thet about ye thet speaks ter me frum erfar; thet tells me ye ar' what ye ought ter be. No mean man kin ever pull frum er fiddle ther heavenly strains uv music thet



ye do. Boy, ther world ar' er big place an' full uv creek bed roads an' rocky spurs; but take er Moonshiner's advice, an' ye'll pull through 'em all an' hev mash ernuf left fer ther next run: Fust an' foremost, be true ter yerself! nextly, ef ther Revenues hem ye in an' ther Deputy-Marshals crowd ye, an' escape fails, use yer gun; lastly, when ther tussle is over, an' ye'r hand-cuffed, an' on yer way ter prison, turn er long pleadin' look ter Him on high, Him, what sees ther sparrow's fall, an' sends ther ravens ter feed ther pore wider wimen, in ther winter time, an' ax Him fer help, an' ye'll git hit. Boy, ye may be er deserter but ye aint no sneak. Old Tobe Sexton is er plain man an' er plain talkin' one, an' what he's got ter say ter er man, he says hit square ter his face. Mark my words: Ez sure ez ther Lord Almighty's heavenly sun shines down on this peak, so sure would I be willin' ter lay this ole *Mud Box*—what people call Tobe Sexton—down on Satan's Leap, an' let hit roll over ther great precipice down inter Devil Creek, if I could see one thing come ter pass."

"What's that?" asked Henry.

"When ther time comes, boy, I'll tell ye, but not now." The old man stood meditating a few minutes, then resumed:



"Well, I low ez ter how we had better be travelin'." Again they resumed their journey home.

Henry's thoughts were racing madly. His dilemma was more complex than ever. "What manner of man am I?" he mused, "that I should betray this old man's confidence and wreck his life. Surely fiend nor devil could do no worse." The torturing pangs of an outraged conscience smote him.

When they reached the clearing that lay between Sexton's home and the woodland, Henry could see Aunt Mandy industriously prodding a fire that burned under some swinging kettles, out in the back-yard. When she saw them, she prodded the fire more vigorously and from the cloud of smoke which enveloped her, they could hear her chiding:

"Ye've come et last, hev ye? Fer ther love uv heaven, Tobe Sexton, what kept ye erway till yit? Here I've been this live-long mornin' bilin' water an' bilin' water, an' heatin' rocks, an' heatin' rocks an' heatin' rocks; an' er waitin', an' er waitin'. Ef ye git any horgs killed ter day, I'd like ter know when hit'll be, fer ther Lord Almighty knows ye oughter had 'em scraped long erfore this." The old woman, without noticing Henry, wiped her eyes with her apron and went on:

"Lady's done gone down ter Broders' ter er



quiltin' an' hyre I've been totin' water an' pokin' fire, an' pokin' water an' totin' fire ever since five er clock; an' now I lay hits seven, if hits er minit, an' narry er man come er nigh." At last the old woman looked up, and seemingly for the first, noticed Henry. She wiped her eyes with her apron, and giving her nose a thumb-screw twist, she rushed at the young man with outstretched arms, and exclaimed:

"Fer ther luv of Heaven! Child uv ther abbey! whar did ye come frum, up outin ther earth? Look at them whiskers! W'y pon my serious word an' honor, ye ar ez rusty ez er ground-horg!"

In another instant her arms were about Henry, and in his excitement, he kissed the old woman time and again.


"Wa'al, boy, ef Mandy ever lets go uv ye, we'll git about an' kill ther hogs," said Sexton.

"I haint holdin' uv 'im," retorted the old woman, pushing the young man away. The remainder of the day was spent in butchering.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### HENRY POSTS A LETTER.

ADY returned late in the afternoon, but Henry did not see her until they met at supper. She received him without affectation, and by the simple candor of her generous nature dispelled his embarrassment and placed him at ease; and, once more they enjoyed the blissful table-talk of old, the very recollection of which had been a bubbling fountain of sweetest memories. But sweetest yet, were the cheerful hours that came between dusk and bed-time, as the family around the glowing fire assembled, and with the violins, Lady and Henry sent forth on the Muses' wings the breath of love. To Henry's troubled mind it was like an hour in paradise. After the young folks had tired of playing, Sexton in his quaint, old fashioned way, touched the golden shell of Orpheus with many a nimble rhythm, but they were tinged with sadness, and he soon grew weary



of playing and hung up his violin, and turning to Henry said:

"Boys, we'll not kill no hogs ter-morry; we'll cut up an' salt down them ar' we killed ter-day. I'm er feard hit'll turn warm; ef hit does, I would er heap sooner hev live hogs then dead'n's, an' besides, hits er leetle early; er nother frost haint goin ter hurt, no how."

"Can we finish tomorrow?" Henry asked.

"Wa'al I loŵ ez ter how we kin; an' ef we do, we'll slip back ter ther still ter-morry night."

"All right," rejoined the young man.

Sexton looked up at the clock an exclaimed:

"Wa'al bein ez we hev ter stir purty early in ther mornin' I vote thet we erjurn. Boy, ye'll find yer same old room ready fer ye. When I holler in ther mornin', come er humpin'."

"I'll be on time."

Henry went to his room, stood a few minutes in deep thought, then went quietly out into the night. The air was cool and bracing; the stars twinkled merrily. He strolled down into the orchard. The sound of a falling apple could now and then be heard, otherwise the night was divinely calm. The flying frost glittered in the moonlight; unmindful of it, he sat on the lap of a fallen tree and meditated.

"Tomorrow I must go back to the still," he



mused, "and there is no telling when I will see daylight again. I must either cut the gunwale chain tonight and leave the Sextons to their fate, or go down with them. Which shall it be?"

He thought of the old man's advice to him, while on the peak, and the drolleay of it amused him.

"Still, there is something in it after all," he muttered. '*Fust an' fomust, be true ter yerself,*' the old man had said. Does that not decide it? *Yes.* Then what right have I to swerve from the line of duty? *None.*" So far as duty was concerned it was all clear enough, yet there arose obscuring his way, an apparition,—the face of Lady Sexton. His surging thoughts cast up the memory of all she had done for him, and left it to bleach on the scorching sands of conscience.

For a long while he sat like one asleep.

*A sigh—a phantom gone—a struggle ended.*

He arose, and with the air of one who has reached some sort of a conclusion went into the house.

The next day as the "hack" that carries the mail from the mountain country down to the railway terminal rattled by the Sexton home, Henry Thogmartin waited at the turn of the road and handed the driver a letter, with the injunction—"Mail it at White House." The night following



Henry returned to the still and again took up the labors of a Shiner.

Lonesome days stretched into weary weeks; but never a sweet breath of open air, or a friendly sun-ray came to cheer him. He tired of the treadmill existence he was filling. Little freedom was allowed him now. He stood aloof from his rough associates; and they looked upon him with an eye of suspicion. Often he would be awakened from his slumber by the strange influence of ever-watching human eyes. He could not see them, yet knew that from somewhere near they were turned upon him. Nor were the waking hours freely his for at every turn a watchful shiner stood at his elbow. He now realized the gruesomeness of his position; and helplessly watched the taper of his freedom slowly, constantly, burn away, while his confines with the grimness of death narrowed in upon him.

Sexton's visits to the still were less frequent, now, that bad weather had set in; and in his absence Critendon Medley would "drop down" and, with much gusto, talk and laugh with the gang. After one of Medley's visits it reached Henry's ears that Lady Sexton and Medley were to be married. Sometime within the next month, his informant had said.

Jealous fancy told Henry that the flame of love



that had beckoned him onward was a will-o-the-wisp after all, and that he had been artfully trapped.

"I know that I have been a fool. I can see it now. Why did I not go about my business; do my work expediently and leave here? Why was I such a fool as to mix myself up in this love affair, any how? If I stay here much longer I am a goner sure. I know what I'll do some night before long, I'll bid the most noble Dixie Shiners a silent farewell," he mused.

But this venture was a great deal easier thought of than accomplished. Patiently he waited for an opportunity to escape. But as skillfully was he foiled at every turn as if he were playing chess with some mighty master.



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE EXPLOSION.



THE gray old earth lay hidden beneath an ivory-like carpet of new fallen snow. Tufts of mush-ice floated down Devil Creek's subterranean channel and heralded the advent of winter.

Sexton was straining every nerve to get another shipment of liquor off before the freeze came which would put a stop to navigation until spring. All was hurry and bustle about the "Abode." Several of the gang had gone down the channel, driving barrels on that had become dead in the mush-ice; others were hurridly rolling more casks into the stream.

Henry quickly recognized this as his long looked for opportunity. Now that the time had at last arrived, how could he best avail himself of it? Every moment might bring defeat to his cherished scheme. He was not long in deciding what to do.



He stealthily crept up the channel to where the boats were moored. Just as he was unleashing a canoe someone approached. He slipped into a crevice and with wildly beating heart waited. The man came on; the rays of light from his torch penetrated and lit up the crevice. The man stopped, looked about the cavern for a moment, then went on to the stock-room; directly he returned and passed on to the still-room without discovering Henry.

After waiting to see that no one else came out, Henry stole from his hiding place and crept back to the canoe. With little difficulty he loosened it, and with one foot on the boat, the other on the shore he turned and took a long lingering look behind. Then with a quick motion he sent the craft skimming out over the inky surface, plowing into the blackness of the avenue. Another instant and he was swallowed by mid-night darkness. It was very slow work, pulling against the current and through the floating snow; but buoyed up by the thoughts of freedom he did not notice the labor. Thus on his blind journey he went. Only the lapping of the waters against the limestone wall broke the grave-like silence of the place. At times the boat grated against some projecting rock, but a push of the oar would send it on its awesome excursion. Occasionally he would stop



and listen, but the death-like hush alone answered his straining ears.

"What would I do if a boat should appear?" he asked himself. He was so near the outside world that he was determined to push by, should one confront him. The air was growing cooler; he knew by this that he was nearing the entrance. Only a short hundred yards and he would be back to the dear old world. He could already hear the sweet music of the wind as it murmured round the mountain side. A glimpse of the sky showed a handful of glittering stars; and the moon was peeping at him from over the distant hill-tops. A stretch of snow-mantled earth lay like a great white sheet in front of him, and reached up to the far away knobs. Another lurch ahead would bring him beneath the blue heavens—would bring him freedom.

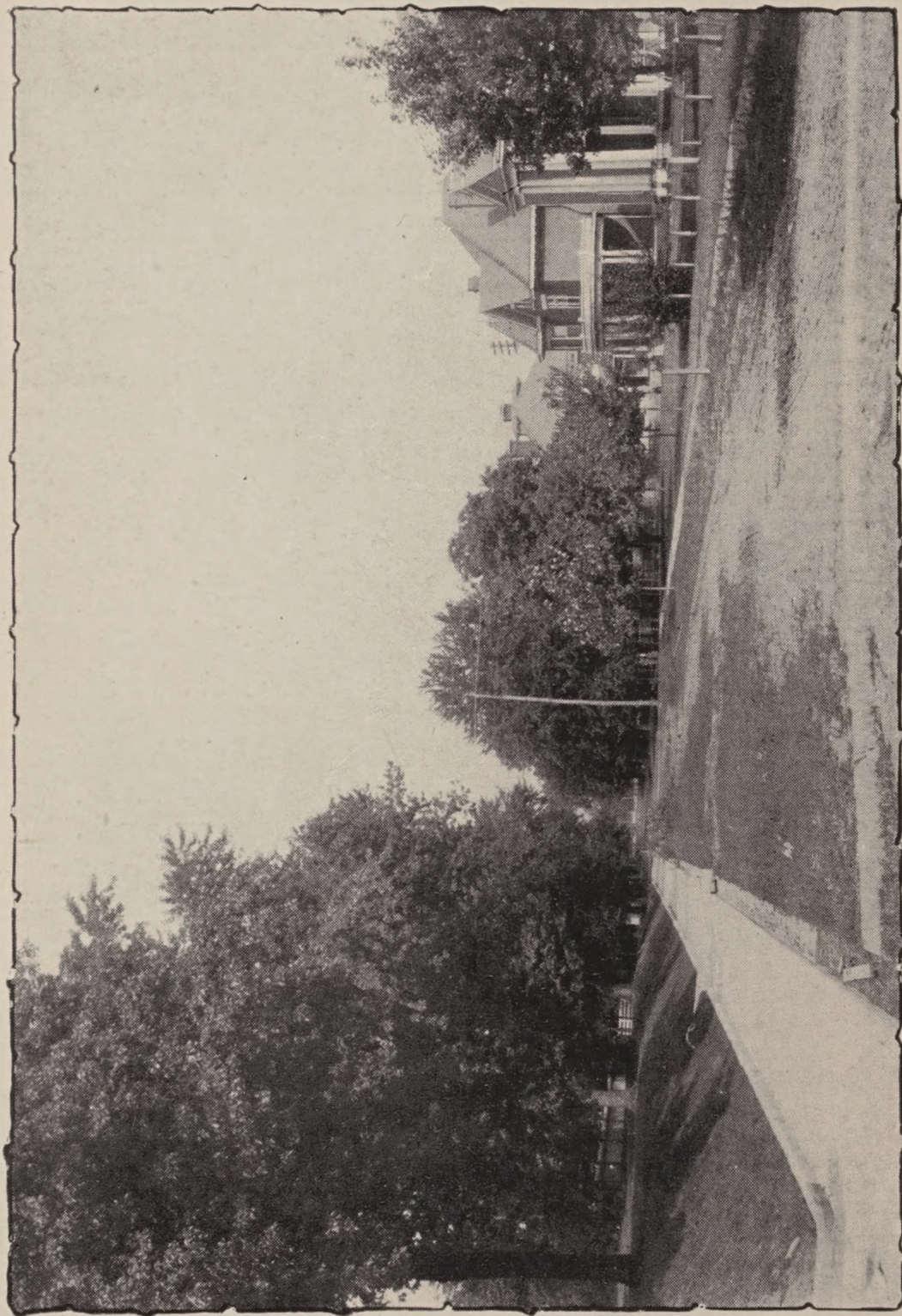
*A blinding flash! A deafening roar!*

"God!! What——"

The exclamation was never finished. A shaft of fire leaped five hundred feet high. The angry flames gleamed and madly lapped the sky.

Henry sat motionless—paralyzed with awe—and glared at the swaying shaft. Night had been turned into day in the twinkle of an eye. The whole country for miles around shone with noontime brilliancy. The boat drifted back into





BEAUTIFUL BATH AVENUE, ASHLAND, KENTUCKY.







the channel some hundred feet or more before Henry realized what had happened. At that instant another boat appeared at the entrance. It lagged there for a short time; long enough, however, for him to see that it carried three passengers, Critendon Medley and two other men. They turned into the passage making for the still. Henry saw the folly of trying to pass them in such close quarters and retreated, hoping to reach the still unapprehended. This he did, barely having time to make fast the boat and disappear before Medley and his crew landed.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### AN IMPARTIAL TRIAL.



ENRY went immediately to his sleeping room and rolled into his bunk. It was not long before he was aroused by one of the Shiners and told to appear at the still-room. He accompanied the man, and upon reaching the still-room was informed that:

“Er meetin’ uv ther Dixie Shiners hed been called, fer ther discharge uv whatsoever business mout come erfore hit.”

The Most Noble mounted an empty barrel, and by giving several gentle raps with the revolver muzzle on the barrel head brought the gang to order; then said:

“I now declare this lodge uv Dixie Shiners trully open fer ther despatch uv all sich business, what-so-ever, ez mout come erfore her.” Addressing himself to a man who held a memorandum book in his hand, he continued: “Most



Honorable Scribe, per-ceed ter de-claim ther per-ceedins uv tother meetin' 'fore this un."

"Ther perceedins were der-claimed," where-upon the Most Noble again spoke:

"Has any new business app'ard on ther table fer ther perusal an' rummigation uv this glorious instertution?"

"Thar ar' er charge foch agin er member, Most Noble," answered the "Honorable Scribe."

"Per-ceed ter declaim hit, thet ther gang may know ther natur uv hit," responded the Most Noble.

The honorable Scribe proceeded to declaim the charge:

"Ter ther Most Noble an' ther Most Honorable gang uv Dixie Shiners, greetin': Be hit known by all uv ye, thet I hev searched an' perused an' 'vestigated ther char-ac-ter uv er brother Shiner; an', in doleful numbers, do I solemnly an' sincerely declar thet said member, ter-wit: Henry 'Thogmartin, (er what-so-ever his name mout be) ar' nuthin' more nur less than er Government spy! In con-sid-e-ration thar uv, I, in behalf uv ther Dixie Shiners, do pray er speedy trial an' prompt exer-cution uv said member; er-cordin' ter ther conster-tution uv this most noble instertution.



“Witness my hand an’ seal,  
his  
Mace X Adkins.  
mark”

A death-like silence only disturbed by the sputter of the boiling stills, followed the reading of the charge. At length the Most Noble addressed Henry:

“A-proach, Brother Thogmartin, an’ stand fer trial.” Henry advanced and confronted the Most Noble, who continued: “Hand yer side arms ter ther Honorable Scribe.” Henry handed his revolver to the Scribe, the Most Noble went on, “Mr. Adkins, a-proach an’ tell in yer own way, this hyre gang, ther why’s an’ wharfores of this grave charge ergin Brother Thogmartin.”

Adkins advanced and in his own way proceeded to give in his testimony "ergin Brother Thogmartin:"

“Most Noble an’ Brother Shiners, ther Lord knows I haint nuthin ergin Brother Thogmartin, an’ I wouldn’t do nuthin ter hurt him ur belittle ’im fer ther world; but ther salvation uv this instertution depends on eternal vigerlance. Thet bein ther case, I appinted myself ez er kind uv vigerlance committee uv one ter investergate an’ rumigate this hyre brother’s char-ac-ter; an’, one day, dreckly arter that, I wuz up ter ther post



office what's at Medley's store, ye know, an' Crit Medley wuz er readin' er letter thet hed come ter ther Post Master, frum some woman in Bal-ter-more. Thet thar letter made inquirments arter ther wharebouts uv thet woman's son. Hit said ez ter how her boy wuz er Secret Sarvice man, an' hed gone ter ther mountains uv Kaintucky ter hunt Moon-shiners, an' ez ter how he hadn't been hearn frum since; an' hit went er head an' described 'im ez bein' spare made, an' blue eyed an' twenty three years old, an' so on. Wa'al I jist thought to myself, while Crit wuz readin', thet no tellin' but what her 'wandrin' boy,' ez she called 'im, mout be campin, at ther Shiners' Abode this very minit. So, I ups an' gits Crit ter write ter her, fer me, makin' more inquirments erbout 'im; an' tellin her ez ter how er man baring ther resemblance uv her boy hed been seen in these parts; an' ter oblige me by sendin' er picture uv her boy, an' I'd endeavor in my feeble way, ter help her locate 'im; an' she sent er full an' complete representation uv 'im; an' so fer ez I am able ter jedge, hit tallies ter er gnat's ertention ter Brother Thogmartin; 'cept, she says her boy's name wuz Allen—Clifton Allen, 'nstead uv Thogmartin. So, Most Noble, thet's erbout all ther is ter ther story; 'ceptin' ther credent'als; an' Brother Crit



Medley hez them, ez I hev told erbout an' more too, an' ken verify all I've said."

"Stand er side, Brother Adkins," said the Most Noble.

All eyes were turned upon Henry who stood leaning against a barrel, apparently as unconcerned as if there was nothing unusual going on. Not the slightest tremor displayed his emotions, but, as stolid as an Indian, he watched the blood curdling proceedings—each step to him a knell.

"A-proach, Brother Medley," commanded the Most Noble, "an' pr'duce ther docements ter ther futherance uv this hyre trial."

Medley approached and handed the Most Noble a number of letters, and a photograph. The letters were examined and in purport found to be as Adkins had testified. Next the photograph was viewed, and, although Henry had grown a long shaggy beard, the picture bore a striking resemblance to him. The Shiners crowded around; the photograph was handed from one to another until all had looked at it. It was then returned to the Most Noble, who then directed his attention to Henry:

"Brother Thogmartin," he said, "what answer hev ye ter make ter this most gravous charge?"

Henry straightened himself up and looked defiantly at the Most Noble:



"It's a lie, every word! I pronounce the whole affair a malicious concoction, emanating from the villainous brain of Crit Medley, and carried into effect by his tool and henchman, Mace Adkins," he answered calmly.

Every body now looked at Medley and Adkins. Medley's face was livid; and for a moment he shook with anger, then burst forth into a torrent of rage and rushed at Henry; and with a terrible oath, cried:

"Let me get to him! Let me kill the spy!"

"Order! Order!" thundered the Most Noble, who was hammering the barrel viciously. Medley being restrained, order was again established.

"Brethren," began the Most Noble, "thes is er serious charge ergin ther brother an' ef he ar found guilty, nothin' short uv death will a'pease our wrath ergin 'im—death er'cordin' ter ther penalty, stip-ur-lated in ther oblergation, shall be his punishment! But ez hit now stands ther evidence ar' not conclusive ernuf ter justify sich masterful measures; in ez much ez ther offendin' brother haint been fully i-den-ter-fied, ez ther man mentioned in ther letters. But ef ther prosecution kin produce ernuf more ev-edence ter qualify ther brother, beyant ther least centilir uv doubt; then do I say, *die traitor!* but not before."



After a brief silence he asked, "What sez ther prosicution?"

Medley cleared his throat and stammered:

"Most Noble,—I have—abundant evidence—I have—I have—I have another—nother—letter that—that—that—that tells of a birthmark—of a birthmark on his—on his—shoulder."

"Fork over thet thar letter, Brother Medley, commanded the Most Noble. Medley handed him the letter which he read; after some hesitation, he exclaimed:

"Strip yourself, Brother Thogmartin!" Henry looked at him coolly and replied:

"This farce has gone far enough, if you fellows want to murder me, here I am—do it—I positively refuse to strip myself.

The Most Noble nervously drummed the barrel with his revolver, and, looking defiantly at Henry said:

"Young man, we don't stand fer no foolishness hyre. What I say goes! Yer'll either strip yer duds ur we'll do hit fer ye. Ye hev got jist three minits ter shed 'em in." He took out his watch and holding it open, counted the time. Henry stared straight at the Most Noble never once taking his eyes from the man's countenance.

"One minute! Two minutes!" counted the Most Noble. A terrible silence followed.



"Three minutes!" he hissed. Henry made no movement toward disrobing. Another silence. The Most Noble was greatly excited.

"Boys!" shouted he, "close in on him!"

There followed a rush. They were at it. A man reeled and fell, sent down by a blow from Henry; another went sprawling to the floor.

"Shoot him! Kill him!" came from half a dozen of the excited crowd. Instantly a number of revolvers gleamed through the air. Two men clinched Henry and were bearing him to the floor.

"Stop! Stop!" rang a command from the rear, the gang hesitated.

"*What ther hell does all thes mean?*" stormed Sexton. Every man with a guilty look hung his head.

"What's up? I say; d— it, don't ye hear me?"

At last, the Most Noble found utterance, and tried to explain:

"Er traitor in ther camp, Tobe, thet's all; an' we wuz givin' 'im er fair an' impartial trial."



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE BATTLE IN THE CAVE.



EXTON'S presence was very much unexpected; they thought him home in bed; which he was until that great awakening flash (the flash that had astounded Henry as he emerged from the under ground passage) aroused him from his slumber. He has hurried to the scene, and found that a gas well, which was being drilled on his land, had caught fire when gas was struck. As soon as he was apprised of what had happened, he hurried to the still to tell the Shiners of the phenomenon; thus making his timely appearance.

"Who is it?" demanded Sexton.

"Brother Thogmartin."

"Who said so?"

"W'y Tobe," replied the Most Noble, "ther charges wuz fotched by Brother Mace Adkins."

"Hits all er d— lie frum start ter finish!" cried Sexton in a rage. He grabbed one of the



men that held Henry down, and jerked him up and gave the other one a kick in the side.

"Let thet boy up ur I'll bore er hole through ye big ernuf ter throw er cat through," commanded Sexton.

The man he had kicked raised with revolver in hand, and confronted him.

"Hit's ye, is hit, Crit Medley? I'm er notion ter blow yer d— cowardly head off! Ye'r up ter yer old game, ar' ye?" Sexton demanded, fingering queerly at his revolver stock.

"Come on, boy," said the old man, taking Henry by the arm and starting to lead him away. As Henry started, Medley sprang in front of Sexton and angrily exclaimed:

"Stand back!" then in a more subdued tone went on, "you shall not take Thogmartin away from us!"

"I will!" stormed Sexton.

"Then it will be over my dead body," said Medley more emphatically. Sexton shoved Medley back, and started, pulling Henry after him. Medley's revolver flashed through the air. Henry sprang between them.

"Hold! Hold!" he shouted. Medley lowered his revolver; the gang in wonderment gazed at them.



Henry turned, facing Sexton, his back to Medley, and in a solemn way said:

"Mr. Sexton, go away and leave me to my fate! God knows I love you too well to see you lose your life for me!"

Tears streamed down the old man's withered cheeks; his frame trembled. He threw his arms around Henry's neck and, with his head resting on the young man's shoulder, wept. His hat fell to the floor and his silvery locks glistened in the flickering gas-light. It was a trying moment! Heart throbs could be heard; the silence was awful. At length, Sexton pulling himself away from Henry brushed the tears from his eyes, and with his hand resting on the young man's shoulder said:

"Boy, I love ye same ez I do my leetle girl, yander at home sleepin' peacefully in her bed, an' I'd die fer ye ez quick; but, tell me, my boy, tell me ther truth. Ef ye'r er sneak, hit'll break my ole heart; but tell me ther truth, boy, ar' ye er spy?"

How imposing the scene. The old man, tottering on the brink of the grave—white haired and pallid as death itself with his hand resting on the youth's shoulder, imploring him to tell the truth—to read his own death sentence.

Like a noble Roman, with his right hand raised



to the high heavens, Henry Thogmartin, in a voice that smote every ear—that chilled the very blood of every one of his guilty auditors—said:

“MR. SEXTON ! DIXIE SHINERS ! HEAR ME ! I AM A UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE MAN, AND I AM PROUD OF IT—EVEN THOUGH YOU KILL ME !

A mutter arose; the cry of “Kill him ! Shoot him !” came from a dozen throats.

Crit Medley’s revolver gleamed ! A flash ! Two shots almost at once echoed through the old cavern, tolling the knell of the Dixie Shiners.

Critendon Medley sank to the ground. Tobe Sexton reeled and fell against a still. Some one gently eased him down and laid them together on the floor. When the smoke had cleared away Henry had vanished.

“He’s gone ! Ther spy’s gone !” cried a number of voices at once.

A panic followed. Men rushed wildly in every direction ; some to the sleeping-room, some to the feast-chamber, others to the boat landing. Henry was in a canoe trying to loosen it. Three men rushed up and dragged him out. A bloody fight followed. A revolver fell from a belt. Henry grabbed it. Twice it spoke. Two men



fell. The torch rolled into the stream and went out. The place was wrapped in darkness. The shots brought a dozen more men to the scene. Henry rushed like a streak at the torch bearer and hurled him backward into the channel. Then they fought in the darkness.

A swinging lick on the head with the barrel of a revolver sent Henry to the floor.

The blood trickled down his cheeks. "Bring er torch," shouted some one. Henry tried to crawl away, but was too weak. His last hope was gone! The man was coming with a torch. He closed his eyes and murmured a prayer, awaiting death.

"SURRENDER! THROW UP YOUR HANDS!" thundered a voice.

The Shiners wheeled and found themselves looking into the muzzles of a row of rifles, and facing a rank of Deputy United States Marshals. A battle followed. The cavern rang with shots. The Shiners grew panic stricken and fled like rats, deeper into the great cave, where they rallied and fought like demons.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

"I HAVE BEEN DREADING THIS."



HE noise, or perhaps, the stifling smell of burnt gun powder aroused Henry. "Thank Heavens my letter did its work," he muttered, as he crawled to the edge of the stream and in the iced water bathed his aching head and washed the blood from his face. He had now regained sufficient strength to get into a boat, which he rowed up the channel, leaving the officers and shiners still fighting.

"When I think it all over—think of all that has happened since I came here, it seems more like some strange bit of fiction than the truth," he soliloquized as he hurried the boat along.

When he reached the outside he hastened on to the Sexton's home.

As he approached the house he could see through the uncurtained window, Lady and Aunt Mandy sitting by the fire. He knew they were



waiting for the old man to return and explain the cause of the great light.

His heart failed him as he thought, "How can I ever break the sad news to them? Poor innocent souls, how peacefully they are waiting for the foot-steps they never again shall hear—the loved one they never again, in life shall see."

For a while he stood watching them, then summoning all his courage he stepped upon the gallery and entered the house. The old woman turned and gazed at him in horror; his bleeding wounds and bloody face, made him appear ghastly. Lady sprang to her feet, wringing her hands.

"My God! I have been dreading this!" she exclaimed.

Aunt Mandy rushed to Henry and between sobs, cried:

"Fer ther love uv heaven, chile, ar' ye killed? Ye ar' bleedin' ter death by inches. Who done hit? Who killed ye?" and without waiting for an answer, went on: "Set down thar, an' I'll fotch cloths an' water an' dress yer head." The old woman went out, and the young man stepped nearer to Lady, who was weeping, and said:

"Calm yourself; do not give way to grief; I have bad news for you." The girl stood with her eyes calmly fixed on him. "Your father is at the





"A HAPPY THROG GATHERED AT ASHLAND'S FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH THAT DAY."







still, badly hurt," he went on. Lady without a word left the room.

The old woman returned bringing water and bandages and proceeded to dress Henry's wounds.

In a few minutes Lady returned heavily dressed, as for a journey through the cold and snow. Turning to her Aunt she said:

"Father is hurt, I am going to him."

"My heavens, Girl! you don't intend to go to the cave do you?" exclaimed Henry, greatly excited.

"I do," she answered.

"You must not think of doing such a rash thing; they are fighting like mad-dogs in the cave. The Deputy-Marshals have come," he explained.

The old woman sunk to the floor and began to wail loudly. The girl fixed her gaze on the young man and coolly asked:

"Will you go with me, or must I go alone?"

"I will go with you, if you *will* go; but think of the danger! you risk your life by such a step," he said.

She did not heed him but went on her way to the cave. He followed her.

It was day break. A cold and cutting north wind met them and hurled a wreath of drifting snow into their faces. Melancholy bleakness over spread the landscape; Mother Earth held not a



smile to cheer them. The snow weighted bushes bowed along their path like gray haired men with uncovered heads in presence of a funeral train. Thus nature deepened the gloom that already clouded their hearts, while in silent dejection they passed on to the mouth of the channel, where, in the boat that Henry had concealed in the bushes, they drifted into the great black throat of the chasm.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### A BURNING SECRET.



**T**HIS was Lady Sexton's first visit to her father's strange resort. The somber surroundings were in keeping with her heart, which was shrouded in sadness. To attempt a description of the soul-harrowing thoughts of the poor girl, as she glided on deeper and deeper into the awful blackness, would be to expose the weakness of imagination to flaunt the poverty of language.

As they reached the landing, a faint flickering light was seen in the still-room, and the murmur of voices broke the tomb-like silence.

They stepped from the boat, and made their way to the still-room. A horrible sight awaited them. On the floor, in a row like logs, lay the bodies of eight dead men. Around them huddled the subdued Shiners who were handcuffed together and guarded. A squad of officers sat on bar-



rels, with their guns across their laps. It was a gruesome Wake.

How Lady Sexton could ever stand the trials of this terrible ordeal is beyond explanation.

Away from the dead, farther on to the rear of the room, with his head resting on a roll of blankets, lay Sexton. When Lady saw him she flew to his side and, kneeling, covered his face with kisses.

Two long arms raised above the girl, then lovingly enfolded her in a fond embrace.

"Thank God, he is not dead," muttered Henry.

"Raise me up so I kin talk some ter ye erfore I die," said the old man feebly. Henry placed his arm around Sexton's shoulders and sustained him while he talked.

"My daughter," he began, "I must leave ye, I hev been called home; an' hit makes my old heart bleed ter go erway, where I never kin see ye ergin; ter leave ye without er pertecter!"

"*She will never be without a protector as long as I live,*" Henry assured the dying man in tones too sincere to be doubted.

"Thank ther Lord! I kin now die happy." He put his arms around his daughter and drew her to him, and pressed her to his bosom. After a brief silence, he went on: "My children, I recerlect no happier time in my life than this, my



dyin' hour. I hev long treasured er hope thet ere I passed erway, ther unfinished love uv her, thet has fer years burned in my bosom, ez constant ez ther gas thet burns under yonder still would some day kindle in ther breasts uv ye children er blaze uv ever lastin' love fer each other; now, thet I know my hopes—my prayers—ar' ter be answered, let me die!" There was not one present who was not weeping. The simple and honest words of the old man went straight to their hearts; and they strained their ears to catch every murmur. With an effort Sexton feebly raised his voice again:

"My children, all my earthly belongin's will fall ter ye; take hit an' try ter bury ther disgrace ole Tobe hes brought on yer innercent heads. I trust ter ye ter see thet yer Aunt Mandy shall never need fer nuthin'. Give her ther ole home place, an' ye, children, move erway frum ther mountains; Sandy County folks'll never be rec'nsiled ter 'Thogmartin livin' ermong 'em. Tell Mandy ter take good care uv ther hounds; an', tell her good-bye fer me. Daughter, hev me buried down in ther orchard; lay me beside yer pore dead mother; plant er rose vine over my body like ther one ye planted over hers. Some warm day when ther flowers ar' bloomin', bring my ole fiddle down ter my grave an' play some uv them sweet, ole-



time tunes—ther ones I love so well. Now, my children, nothin' is left unsaid, 'cept ter bless ye both an' say good-bye; an' then depart with er memory uv ther joys thet ar' gone, ter jine my darlin' Mary, who is callin' me frum heaven. Children, will ye meet us up thar? It is growin' dark, ther gas is burnin' low; yer forms I kin hardly see; I hear ther hounds yelpin' on ther mountain-side, let me go ter 'em. All is light now; yes, thar is Mary—beckonin' me ter heaven—I must go! Wait Mary, wait er minit longer! I can't come ter ye with this terrible burnin' secret gnawin' at my heart. Listen children, heed me while I tell ye an awful thing: When I'm dead, go yander ter ther left wing uv ther cave, push through ter Dead Man's Crevice until yer come ter er crack in ther passage floor; hits too wide ter jump ercross, but lay er puncheon over hit an' go on an' ye'll come ter er iron door. Hits locked an' barred, hard an' fast, but Mace Adkins totes ther key. Make him open hit. 'Thar ye'll find—" his voice broke and failed him; "Mary, I'm comin'!" he gasped. His head fell forward; his chin rested on his breast. The old man was dead.



## CHAPTER XX.

### SWIFT'S SILVER MINES.



IN obedience to Sexton's dying command, Mace Adkins was forced to guide a searching party, led by Coon Mann and a number of officers, into the left wing of the cave. Lady, under the protection of several Deputy-Marshals who stayed to guard the prisoners, remained with her dead. The journey through "Dead Man's Crevice" was attended with a series of disagreeable experiences. This passage gradually contracted to a serpentine way, until the walls were only eighteen or twenty inches apart; numerous elbows were encountered, while the distance from the footing to the ledge overhead was, at some points, not more than four feet. The rocky sides were nicely grained with waves and ripples, having the appearance of petrified running water. This winding way was suddenly arrested by an abyss which stopped further exploration until a puncheon was



procured and utilized to bridge the gap. The passage then quickly widened into a hall; which, Mace Adkins explained, led to the lost "Swift's Silver Mines."

The rescuing party pressed on until the iron door confronted them. Adkins applied the key and threw back the bars. A hair-raising creak followed, as the massive door swung on its rusty bearings.

As they entered the silver chamber, a tiny light could be seen far in the distance. A madman's shriek telling too plainly its story of days and nights of misery; yes, its months and years of inhuman torture, reverberated through the dreary waste of darkness and fell upon their ears.

Adkins, in advance of the party, with torch high above his head, moved cautiously across the marshy surface of the intervening expanse. The ground here, unlike that of any other part of the cave, was broken by numerous trickling brooklets which wound gently through a mat of soft, hair-like fungi; forming an almost impassable bog. Throughout this ebon court, there hung an atmosphere peculiar to the gruesome environs—an atmosphere possessing no affinity with the wholesome, sunlit air of Heaven, but an atmosphere reeked up by the putrification of dead reptiles, decayed vegetation, and the green slimy scum of



the morass—a noxious pestilential vapor, cadaverous, sluggish and intensely oppressive.

At a point, somewhere near midway, between the entrance and the glimmering light on ahead, a bleached and ghastly human skeleton crouched, half hidden, half revealed, before them. With a shudder they passed it by and pressed onward. The next appalling guardsman to challenge them was a mad-man, who, in demoniacal frenzy, hurled a staggering volley of vituperative oaths upon their heads, as he struggled with seemingly, superhuman strength, to break from the chains that shackled him to the spot. The rescuers advanced to within a few feet of the poor wretch; when he suddenly assumed a bearing of pomposity, and loftily acclaimed, “Advance, vanquished heroes; present unto your gallant victor the sword of the fallen Confederacy! Behold! I am General Grant!”

The “General,” like the skeleton, was given a wide berth, and left madly urging his imaginary followers to charge upon the flying enemy.

They went on.

At last the footing became more substantial; a gradual elevation brought them onto a dry and dusty table-rock, where the atmosphere became much rarer, losing the humidity of the fen. This atmospheric change was, no doubt, brought



about by a fissure in the cavern wall which admitted, from the subterranean channel of Devil Creek, a current of fresh air.

Now, no more than a hundred yards away, glowed that phantasmagoric camp-fire, which had lured them across the bog; and around it huddled three human forms; while, above the sonorous tread of the oncomers, resounded from the morass the inhuman wailing shrieks of that poor mortal wreck anchored out in that venomous sea, to be dashed to atoms against the shorn walls of reason's blinded pharos by the raging of his own tempetuous intellect.

To the three martyred souls that stood by their one solace—the glimmering gas-light—that lapse of time, those moments of suspense, were surely moments of ponderous bewilderment. It would be only to stupefy one's faculties, to try, even slightly, to imagine or comprehend the thoughts of those long-suffering mortals, as they beheld the officers slowly approaching them, from an unfrequented region—from the uncanny field of hell—perhaps they thought, unable as they were, to divine whether it was the heralds of death, or the harbingers of emancipation who sought to invade their miasmatic *donjon-keep*.

Then call to mind if you can, a train of thoughts similar to those of Henry, as he trudged the slush



and slime of the marsh; try to imagine his feelings as he surveyed the grinning skull and ghastly bones of the skeleton; or, when he, in terror, tinged with compassion, looked upon the agonizing maniac battling with his manacles. Doubtless Henry wondered if either of these, the skeleton or the mad-man, was the woeful remains of George Allen—his father. Perhaps he mused, "If so, I pray to God, it be the one whose soul has slipped the shackles of this malignant prison."

Mere words are inadequate to portray the harrowed fancies—the ravished senses of Henry, as, one after the other, the appalling phenomena of that terrible night appeared before his frenzied vision. The question uppermost in his mind was, "Can one of these poor wretches be my father? If so, will I recognize him?" But, as he gazed upon those beings of weird strangeness, who by this time confronted their liberators, he fully comprehended the absurdity of such a thought. For surely man was never before the embodiment of a creature more foreign to simple humanity. It was impossible for Henry to identify one feature, or lineament of the wan beings before him, in common with those of his father. In fact little more than their bodily contour held any semblance akin to that of human. A heavy growth of long silken hair floated over their faces. Their beard



long and sweeping, like their hair in color, presented a lustrous silvery whiteness, as if it had borrowed its hue from the crucible of molten metal hard by, which, in dancing ripples, sparkled under the torch light. Liquid eyes exceedingly luminous, beamed from their cadaverous portals a devilish glare that struck every spectator with awe. The ears, nose and hands were gloved in the same silvery filaments. While the fingernails curved over the tips, sharpening into animal-like claws. Their raiment was similar to that worn by the Shiners. Rip Van Winkle in his dotage would have afforded little conception of extreme old age, in comparison with these mummified dwellers of this subterraneous spot. They presented an appearance of antiquity quite incredible.

Coon Mann imparted to them the glad intelligence :

“Gentlemen, at last, your liberators have come; you are now free men.”

“Thank God! Thank God!” they cried.

“Our years of patient prayers were not in vain.”

After a brief silence one of the captives asked, “What led to our discovery?”

Mann pointed to Henry, who stood by his side, and replied, “This young detective, Mr. Clifton Allen came—”



"My son! My darling Cliff! I knew you would some day come and rescue me!" cried the spokesman, as he threw up his arms pleadingly and fell to his knees, weeping, in front of Henry, who stooped and pressed a loving kiss on the happy old man's brow.

After a pathetic scene they left the place, with Adkins at the head of the van and re-trod the dismal quagmire. The mad-man was released and taken into custody; but not until they had humored his phantasmal conjecture that he was General Grant, and allowed him to march with Mace Adkins, would he quit his death stand.

After a time, they passed from the marsh out into the entrance of Dead Man's Crevice. Adkins handed Henry the torch, while he busied himself in barring the door. As the ponderous shutter swung to, forever hiding from their view the loathsome bog, a sigh of relief went up from George Allen and his survivors.

Henry, having the torch in hand, now unconsciously assumed the guidance, and advanced into the crevice. Adkins was next in line; immediately following him came the "Mad General" chuckling exultantly, and, all the while affectionately patting Adkins on the back.

Things went well until the abyss was reached. Henry passed over and held the light for the



others. It was thought best that Adkins should grasp the "General's" wrist, and assist him in crossing the narrow bridge. The lunatic followed with alacrity until he stood midway over the pit. Then, evidently, for the first, he took note of his perilous surroundings; for an instant he halted, peering intently down into the sullen depth. A low laugh of utter distress issued from his lips, and, as he glanced back over his shoulder at his followers, his eyes strangely gleamed, as if the contemplation of some fiendish prank gambled through his maddened brain. "Come on, fool," sharply commanded Adkins, giving the "General" an angry jerk. Instantly, and with all the diabolical fury of an enraged lion, the maniac hurled himself forward, locking his arms about Adkin's neck. For a few painful seconds they swayed, back and forth, over the awful precipice; then like a falling tree, toppled head-long, down, down, down, into the sickening gulf. A fiendish cry, "Ha! Ha! He! He! He!" in hair raising intonations, echoed from the hungry abyss. The sable portals closed over their spectral tomb. A short interval of torturing silence broken only by a low melancholy exclamation, "*It is well*" was the only response to the marrow-congealing spectacle; and again the horror stricken train resumed its dismal tread through the crevice.



## CHAPTER XXI.

"THERE HE RESTS."



FEW hours later, strong men bore the form of Sexton to his mountain home. The winter winds whispered sadly through the swaying pines that stood about the old log house.

The snow had been brushed from a little hillock down in the orchard and beside it rounded the yellow earth of a new made grave.

There he rests—in the shadow of the Cumberlands.

Should you ever travel the old river road to the "Gap," look to the left after passing Levica. There you will see reaching heavenward a solitary shaft of marble. If pity or wonder further interest awakens, approach and read this simple legend graven on the stone from some lines found in Henry Thogmartin's diary:



## THEY CALLED HIM A MOONSHINER.

His wealth was great as Monte Carlo's  
 But he destined to ignore it.  
 The sputter of the still—his inspiration  
 And oft' he would implore it.  
 The violin was his God;  
 Music his religion.  
 He scorned the government,  
 And held the law in little less derision.  
 Pray, delve no deeper, his excellencies to disclose,  
 Or frailties to uncover;  
 But list to the leaves o'er head,  
 As they murmur to each other:  
 He was as tender hearted as a child,  
 As sympathetic as a mother.

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*

When Mrs. Wilson, the lady with whom Lady Sexton had made her home while attending school in Ashland, heard of the poor girl's bereavement, she went straight to her side and comforted her through the trying hours that followed. After the last sad rites had been performed, that gentle woman would hear to nothing short of a promise from Lady to accept a home with her; and with a sad and sorrowful heart, Lady, a month later, bade good-bye to Aunt Mandy, and turned away from the home of her infancy and the graves of her parents.

A distant relative of the Sexton's, a young man who had just married, gladly accepted Aunt Mandy's offer to share the old home with him.

There she still lives.

True to her character she continues to pursue





“KNITTING A SOCK, TO MATCH ONE THAT WAS FINISHED ANOTHER WINTER—FOR A FOOT THAT IS GONE.”







the quaintness of her way: In spring-time watching for the dark of the moon, "ther best time ter drap taters," or, for the light of the moon, "ther best time ter plant beans." In summer, busying herself in manufacturing her famous ginger cakes and sweet cider, "fer ther fourth uv July," or, later, in picking black berries from the briars that abound thickest in Sandy County; in autumn, in turning the great yellow pumpkins into golden butter; and, when the cold bleak days of winter come, and the snow in ghostly wreaths is hurled past the window, and the chilling blast is howling round the old log house; when the hickory log sings on the open fire place, and the cricket steals out on the hearth,—it is then that the kind hearted old soul sits in the warm corner, knitting a sock to match one that was finished another winter—for a foot that is gone. A tear glides down her wrinkled cheek—she is thinking of Sexton—The Moonshiner.

\* \* \* \* \*

The survivors of the Dixie Shiners were escorted to C———, where followed the formalities of that sage tribunal, the United States District Court. After sentence, a straggling gang of mountaineers filed from the court-room. A young woman dressed in homespun, carrying a baby in her arms, followed them to the corridor



of the jail. A stout rugged fellow hesitated at the entrance, and turned to the woman, "Don't go in," he said and started on.

"Won't you kiss me, Bill?" she pleaded with tears streaming down her face. He stooped and impatiently pressed his lips to hers and whispered, "Don't let the 'ungin fergit me, Annie, I'll be home in six months, an' by ther time ther milk's dry in ther corn I'll hev er fire blazin' under ernoother moonshine still."

"Walk along," called the turnkey, and down the dismal hall-way to their cells passed the followers of Sexton.

An iron door swung to with a heavy clang. The woman with the baby suppressed a sob, and turned sadly from the jail.

For the time being only is the fate of those entombed wretches sealed. A six months hence will find them swaggering homeward. They will follow each other, Indian fashion, along the old mountain road. "Once a Shiner always such," has been said with much truth. No sooner is he free from prison than ways and means for additional operation are swiftly set in motion.

So extensive is this fraud that in 1901 Uncle Sam sustained a loss of \$1,500,000. The illicit distiller's profit is more than one thousand per cent, when disposing of his product at one dollar



and fifty cents per gallon, about one third what the legal distiller gets for the same thing. On every gallon of moonshine Uncle Sam is fleeced to the extent of one dollar and ten cents.

George Allen and his companions, as soon as their health would permit, set out for their respective homes.

Clifton gave every attention to his father who within a fortnight was restored to his family.

It was learned from George Allen and his companions that they had been captured by the Medleys eight years before, and placed in that loathsome dungeon and forced by threats of death to mine from their prison walls the silver quartz; which by the use of a small natural gas smelter was reduced to metal. After a considerable amount of the silver bullion had accumulated it was moulded into coin of three denominations—quarters, halves and dollars. This spurious money was shoved into circulation through Medley's store, whence they received their supply of clothing and food.

Soon after the annihilation of the Dixie Shiners, Cave No. 432, Clifton Allen, the detective, was sent to New Mexico. Here, a band of counterfeiters had been operating in a most successful manner for several years. So far all efforts to apprehend them had been futile, but Allen's recent



success in the mountains of Kentucky had so encouraged the Service that they now believed it only a question of time, and not a long time either, until this band of outlaws would also be exterminated.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### HALLOWE'EN IN ASHLAND.



ALMOST two years had passed since Lady Sexton left the mountains. To her they had been fraught with wonderful changes. Already the giant hand of commerce was steering that mighty craft—Progress—over a flood-tide of developments, into the treasure hidden mountains of Sandy County; two railroads were battling for supremacy of right-of-way through the rich “Sexton Coal Fields,” as the Moonshiner’s broad acres were known. The gigantic gas well had flamed away for more than a year in its uncontrollable fury; lighting up the country at night for more than a score of miles round about, as radiant as the noon day. That is not all it had done. It had attracted Capital’s omnipotent eye; and, by its mystic charms, the noble forests, the hills of cannel coal, the valleys of hissing gas and seeping kerosene, were turned into rivers of gold. Abound-



ing gas wells now marked the landscape. The fields of broom sedge were gone. The timid hare had moved to quarters more remote.

Down the Sandy valley, tracing the border of Kentucky and West Virginia, onward to the Ohio, stretches a pipe line through which journeys incessantly millions of cubic feet of the Moonshiner's natural gas, while throughout the Triple-State district, in city, hamlet and home, in mills, factories and furnaces, no other fuel is used. In truth, we have but to turn and here before us, warming us as we write, contentedly blazes the same vein of gas that once boiled the mash in Sexton's moonshine stills.

Through the skillful management of a Mr. Hagerson, an attorney, and an old friend of the Sexton's, Lady Sexton had realized a fortune, in fact a price little less than fabulous, amounting in round numbers to more than \$500,000, for the oil and gas privileges alone, of her estate. While the remaining timber, coal and other mineral interests had enhanced her capital until she was, many times a millionaire.

The fame of the wealthy mountain girl was spread through the land; reporters were eager to get bits of her history, that they might weave them on fiction's nimble loom into some glittering romance; her suitors were numbered by the score;



no ball or reception of Ashland's elite was thought of any consequence unless the beautiful Miss Sexton was there; her photographs appeared in many of the public papers with long accounts of her wealth and rare beauty; and her name, within a few hundred miles of Ashland, was the topic of general comment, in hotel-lobby, in office, and store, church and hall—everywhere one would go, in that vicinity, they would hear people eulogizing the beauty or fortune of Lady Sexton. But, if all this great publicity was noted by her, no one ever knew it; she always bore the same sweet disposition so true to the girl we have known, when she was only the "Shiner's daughter."

\* \* \* \* \*

In the early evening of an October day in 1900, Lady Sexton sat in the rich old-fashioned parlor of Mrs. Wilson's Bath Avenue home. Darkness had stolen in unnoticed; the soft glowing fire in the grate, shed a mellow tinted light which blended sweetly with the pink of her cheeks. She was alone. It was Hallowe'en; grotesque jack-o-lanterns beamed their ghastly grin from every crook and cranny along Ashland's spacious avenues. Small boys in delirious Indian revel danced around burning hillocks of autumn tinted leaves. The little French clock, with its subdued strike was chiming the hour of six.



“Just an hour since he left,” she mused, “Mr. Richards is so handsome, so nice too! I am sorry he proposed. Oh, I wish he had never seen me! or, that he thought less of me. I know he was sorely disappointed by my refusal. How it grieved me to tell him ‘no!’ Now, Mrs. Wilson will be displeased with me; only last night she said: ‘Lady, Mr. Richards is profoundly in earnest; he loves you! How can you disappoint him? He is so kind, so generous, so noble. Many girls would not refuse him, even tho’ he were penniless; think of it, my child; think of all his wealth. Why, your fortunes combined would be invincible!’ When in answer, I only shook my head, I could see that she was piqued. Sorrowfully she turned away and left me. Bless her, she has been a mother to me; it troubles me to spoil her pretty plan; but, one knows her own heart best.” Thus Lady sat meditatively gazing into the fire’s ruddy glow. A throng of leaping fire-elves danced merrily in and out, up and down, through the flickering flames. As she watched them in their antics, the unseen hand of Memory began to slowly shift within her view, like a passing panorama, pictures of the past. Many of them were dim, and others barely discernable; but each succeeding vision was more



defined until at last, as vivid as a painting they stood out on the golden back-ground.

Each departed pleasure, sorrow, playmate and friend came in turn and greeted her. Many of them she fain would have hurried along but they all passed with the same monotonous drag. Ah! at last there came a scene that she was loth to lose; a family group, on the gallery, at her old home; she could see Aunt Mandy, her father, Henry, and herself. Henry was playing the violin. The picture was so real that she could hear the strains of music echoing on and on through the woodland. The panorama turns another scene; it brings a shudder. She shuts her eyes to exclude it; but, No! Memory has no lids. She sees herself on the verge of Buzzard Roost Cliffs. "It is that awful night brought back again," she murmurs. She sees the lightning flash across the gulch. Sees the swaying pines and hears the beating rain. Then comes the battle, the rescue of Henry, and the flight homeward. Then, Sweet supplants the Bitter: She is seated on a moss covered stone; Henry is standing in front of her trying to express his deep gratitude for her heroic service. But, instead, he bursts into tears and falls to his knees before her and declares his love! A halo of joy obscures the picture; her head is resting on his shoulder; she fancies she feels his



strong embrace and hears his loving words whispered into her ear: "Darling," he is saying, "I love you! You have filled my heart with gladness ever since I first saw you! Sweetheart, will you be my wife?" and audibly she murmured, "Yes." The panorama was gone. "Cruel fate has kept us apart," she murmured.

Almost a year had passed since she had heard from him, but what mattered that? She would wait a dozen years if need be. She loved him. That told the whole story. When he did return to her, he would find her waiting faithfully. "What if he is dead, is dead?" questioned the wind that murmured down the chimney, "Then I will meet him in heaven," she answered aloud.

Her reverie was broken by a sharp ring of the door-bell. She waited for some one to answer but no one came; again it rang. "I will answer it myself," she thought, and from the dimly lighted parlor she stepped out under the full radiance of the hall chandelier. Her beauty was enrapturing, as she stood in evening dress with her beautifully rounded arm extended to turn the bolt. The door swung noiselessly open; a familiar form passed over the threshold.

"Henry!"

"Lady!"



The door closed on the outer darkness, and the lovers were locked in a fond embrace.

"And, you have come at last," said Lady, leading the way to the parlor; "I can scarcely realize that it is not a Hallowe'en joke."

Two short months had swiftly glided by since that blissful reunion. Christmas bells were proclaiming their glad tidings—"Peace on earth, good will to men." A happy throng gathered at Ashland's First Presbyterian Church that day.

At high noon some one touched the organ. Two fond hearts leaped in response to those ever touching strains of Mendelssohn's. Then, down the aisle floated the sacred words that bound them to each other for life.

Lady looked sweetly at her husband and whispered, "He called you Clifton, but, I shall always call you Henry."



## CHAPTER XXIII.

"I AM ONE OF THEM."



IMMEDIATELY after the wedding, our young friends left for Baltimore, where they remained with Clifton's family until the first balmy days of spring. Then they visited Washington, Philadelphia and New York; after a short stay at the latter place, they took passage for Europe.

It was a fine day in May when they sailed. As the last trace of land faded from view and they beheld themselves afloat on the mighty Atlantic, with not a tree or mountain or strip of earth any where to be seen, a strange delight filled their souls; but as they thought of the past, thought of their friends in the Big Sandy Valley, and of the unknown ahead, a sensation of mingled fear and pleasure and melancholy sadness came, like some gloomy foreboding, and hovered about them.



Lady nestled a little nearer to her husband and with eyes softly overflowing with tears, gave him a tender look as she asked:

“Dearest, what would Aunt Mandy say if she were here?”

His only answer was to take her in his arms and kiss away the starting tears.

In due time they landed at Plymouth, England. They next went to London, remaining there until the following autumn. They visited the places of eminent interest throughout England. Then continued their journey touring France and Italy. At last, tired of sight-seeing, and longing for home, they sailed for America. In the early spring a little more than a year from the time of their departure they arrived in New York.

A few weeks afterwards a carriage drew up to the Sexton Homestead, in Sandy County, Kentucky. Aunt Mandy Sexton was paring apples out on the back porch, at the time, and thinking some railroad contractor (for such were numerous in that country just then) had stopped to get a drink of water, she took down a gourd dipper from the kitchen wall and hastened around the house, toward the well. When she came in view of the road she discovered Lady and Clifton alighting from their carriage. With a joyous shout she sprang toward them; she dropped the



gourd and stepping on it, smashing it into pieces. In an instant she had crossed the yard and held her niece tightly in her loving arms. Between exclamations of joy, and sobs of grief, the good old soul tried to tell them how happy she felt; how glad she was to again have them at home. The words choked in her throat and she broke down and wept.

"Laws hev mercy, children," she pathetically cried, "hits like havin' them back, what's in hevin, fer ter see ye here er gin." She tottered; her emotions had overcome her. Clifton assisted her to a chair on the gallery. Once more Lady entered her old home. When she came out she brought a turkey-wing fan, a clay pipe and a twist of "home made" tobacco. Clifton filled the pipe and lit it; and when the clouds of sweet scented smoke floated up among the vines that clustered over the door, he handed the pipe to the old woman. A saintly smile played over her face, as she murmured:

"Thank God, we ar' all et home tergether once more—all but one." She began to weep. They consoled her as best they could but every little while she would say:

"Oh, ef Tobe wuz jist here, how happy I'd be."

That night when the moon had climbed above the mountain and was showering its mellow



golden rays over Sandy County, the household gathered out on the gallery. The air, sweet with the scent of blooming flowers, murmured cheerfully through the fresh young leaves. The plaintive song of a whip-poor-will came from out in the woods, and a complaining owl down in the dusky dell spoke to them of other days—days now gone forever.

While they sat talking Lady went into the house. When she came out she softly placed in Clifton's hands the old violin—the one Tobe used to play. With a sweep of the bow he sent their thoughts back to the night, long ago, when he had surrendered his heart to the dearest, sweetest creature on earth, to him.

Long after the others had gone to bed, Clifton and Lady sat on the old gallery talking. The chickens out in the hen house were crowing for midnight. The owl had ceased his complaining and the whip-poor-will's song no longer could be heard.

As they arose to go into the house Clifton clasped Lady in his arms and softly said:

"Darling little angel, we have traveled over much of the world; have seen many people and places, but have we seen any as dear to our hearts as those of our Old Kentucky Home?"

"No, sweetheart, I believe not," she murmured.



"No, we have not," he rejoined, "and little one, I believe that there is no better people on God's green earth than these who dwell here in the Big Sandy Valley; they may appear, to those unfamiliar with their customs, a little odd; but for warm hearted hospitality, charity and fidelity the world holds not their equal."

"Yes, love, I know all you say is true, *and thank God, I am one of them,*" she replied.

He pressed a kiss to her lips and they went into the house.



## FIVE YEARS AFTER.



ON a lordly eminence overlooking the town of Levica where a cluster of giant oaks and stalwart pines tower above a carpet of soft swaying blue grass, a broad drive way made of white pebbles and bordered with pink shells leads up to a state-ly mansion. On the veranda a man is sitting and by his side, swinging in a hammock, is his wife. Out on the front lawn a negro boy is playing with a woolly dog to the delight of a chubby, rosy faced child in short dresses. The man and woman are Clifton and Lady and the rosy faced child is theirs, and for "old time's sake" they call him "Little Henry."

Down, in front of them, across fields of waving corn and nodding wheat glistens the Silvery Sandy. On the nearer shore a train of palace cars is sweeping down the valley to the North. On the opposite bank a long smoky train of coal cars is crawling up a heavy grade, on its way to the South.

The Arcadia of a decade ago, is in the hands of the "*merciless furriner.*"

THE END.



















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